



2024 Annual Accountability Report

First Steps to School Readiness

Agency Code: H620

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AGENCY’S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

South Carolina First Steps: Working Together So Every Child Reaches Their Highest Potential

In South Carolina, there are over 330,000 children under age 6, and we estimate that 42% of them are eligible for First Steps services¹. In FY24, First Steps celebrated its 25th anniversary of operating as a national model for public-private partnership, providing programs that work and are backed by decades of research, and leveraging millions annually from federal, state, and local resources to serve young children, their families, and their communities to ensure all children reach their highest potential.

Established in state law on June 28, 1999, South Carolina First Steps is the state’s only dedicated, comprehensive early childhood initiative focused on getting children ready for success in school and life. As both a state agency and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, First Steps works with families, early educators, and partners statewide to support children from birth through age five to close the gap on student’s preparedness for success in school. Since the beginning, we have taken a holistic approach to accomplishing our mission, offering services that improve children’s health, strengthen families, expand access to quality early care and education, and help transition rising kindergartners into school.

To have the greatest impact on young children requires collaboration across public agencies, community-based entities, and the private sector at both the local and state level. First Steps local partnership boards include a cross section of key early childhood stakeholders who assess local early childhood needs and provide services to young children and their families. First Steps 4K is a partnership between the South Carolina First Steps and private and faith-based child care centers, charter schools and private schools. At the state level, First Steps operates the Early Childhood Advisory Council, the statutorily authorized structure for coordinating all of South Carolina’s public investments in early childhood services, ensuring efficient use of federal, state and local funds, and building a cohesive system that ensures young children are healthy and safe, ready for school, and supported by engaged families and communities. Our trustees serve concurrently as ECAC members and our staff coordinates their collaborative efforts.

During FY24, First Steps:

- Served 64,678 children directly through First Steps local partnerships and First Steps 4K (+19.2% over FY23)
- Enrolled 4,119 students in in-person, full-day 4K in 333 classrooms within private, non-profit, and faith-based First Steps 4K providers through the 180th day of school (+12.8% over FY23)
- Served 7,461 children in high-intensity programs through First Steps local partnerships, which includes evidence-based home visiting and early care and education programs (-6.7% over FY23)
- Hosted over 37,000 hours of professional development for child care providers through on-site technical assistance from local partnerships and First Steps 4K coaches (+16.2% over FY23)

Expanded and Enhanced Services to Children and Families: Local Partnerships

- In FY24, **local partnerships increased the number of children directly served to the highest number to date** (+19.8% over FY23), with notable growth in the reach of:
 - Low-intensity, evidence-based, book distribution programs
 - **Reach Out and Read**, a program where trained medical clinicians use books and guidance around shared stories during well-child visits as a tool for practicing primary care to support healthy relationships between children and their caregivers and healthy childhood development: 14,203 children served (+20.2% over FY23) through 11 local partnerships (+37.5% over FY23)

¹ Data from American Community Survey 5-year Estimates (2018-2022). Table B17024. US Census Bureau. Eligible for First Steps services defined as children under age 6 living in households <185% federal poverty level (141,906 of 334,324 estimated children).

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- In FY24, South Carolina First Steps continued to provide a streamlined eligibility and application process for families enrolling in local partnership programs by including every local partnership program on [First5SC.org](https://www.first5sc.org), establishing a uniform process for eligibility and enrollment, making programs and services more accessible to the families who benefit most from our programs (infants and toddlers) and reducing the administrative burden for families. The number one application completed by families on the First5SC common application was for First Steps local partnership programs. Overall, 62% of First5SC visitors are accessing the site when government offices are typically closed (i.e., outside of Monday through Friday 9AM-5PM).

Expanded Access to Quality Early Education: First Steps 4K

- **Continued expansion** of First Steps 4K statewide (year three of implementation), increasing students served by 13% compared to previous year (4,119 students in FY24) and providing high-quality 4K options across 333 classrooms in child care, private school and charter school providers. First Steps 4K Expansion grants totaling \$167,070 were awarded to six child care providers and schools to add or expand First Steps 4K programs. This expansion is estimated to serve an additional 118 children and families across the state. The recipients of these grants were:
 - Corinth Community Development Corporation, Union County
 - Our Lady of Peace Catholic School, Aiken County
 - Early Start Child Development Center, Horry County
 - Miss Tammy’s Little Learning Center, Spartanburg County
 - MEGA Child Development Center, Lexington County
 - Footprints Learning Center of Fountain Inn, Greenville County
- **Countdown to 4K:** Continued to pilot a new transition to 4K program, modifying Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK), a long-standing, evidence-informed program, to serve students transitioning into PreK-4 classrooms. First Steps’ school transition programs served 2,247 children during summer 2023 with CTK reaching 1,398 children and Countdown to 4K (CT4K) impacting 849 children during its second year of implementation (+6.2% and +27.1% over FY23, respectively). 2,450 children are projected to be served in the summer of 2024, with 1,650 in Countdown to Kindergarten and 800 in Countdown to 4K. The program is a three-way collaboration involving First Steps local partnerships, First Steps 4K, and public schools.
- **Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY):** Engaged the families of First Steps 4K students in a weekly, academically enriching, home-based program throughout the school year, served 178 families (our biggest year yet!; +63.3% over FY23) and was delivered by First Steps AmeriCorps members, filling a gap in home-visiting offerings for preschoolers and parent engagement in the academic development of their 4K student.
- **First Steps 4K+:** This partnership between DSS and First Steps 4K completed its third year, which provides an extended day, extended year or sibling voucher for children ages 0-12. For First Steps 4K providers to participate in this partnership, they must participate in the voluntary child care quality rating and improvement system called ABC Quality. It has been a longstanding goal to increase participation in this program, and in FY24, the percentage of First Steps 4K providers enrolled in ABC Quality and, therefore, able to accept the additional support through First Steps 4K+ rose to 86%.
- **Language and Literacy Boost:** In FY24, over 1,553 students benefited from their teacher’s participation in the language and literacy boost program. At the end of the year, 86% and 80% of students could identify more than 11 uppercase and lowercase letters, respectively, compared to 42% and 33% at the beginning of the year. Over the year, participation in family engagement events offered by providers increased to reaching over 7,000 people at over 427 events.
- **Recruitment and Retention Stipends:** 511 First Steps 4K Lead Teachers received at least one stipend during the first three years of the initiative, and of those who received that first stipend, 20% received all six quarterly stipends, meaning they were successfully retained across the three years. Notably, 25% of the teachers who received all six stipends had less than one year of experience, at the first stipend payment, as the Lead Teacher for First Steps 4K, indicating that the intervention worked to retain newer

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teachers. In FY24, First Steps 4K Instructional Assistants were included in the stipend payments for the first time, with 183 receiving at least one payment.

- **First Steps 4K Academy:** More than 550 teachers and 300 leaders (center directors, school leaders, and owners) participated in intensive, multi-day, in-person professional development through the annual First Steps 4K Academy ahead of the 2024 – 2025 school year. First Steps 4K staff developed and offered over 104 hours of targeted training and professional development opportunities throughout the year for teachers and school leaders.
- **Aim4Excellence:** First Steps funded, staffed, and supported a cohort of leaders to participate in the national director’s credentialing program through National Louis University’s McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership. Expanding this program beyond First Steps 4K providers to also incorporate early childhood leaders participating in First Steps Local Partnership child care quality programs was an indicator of the way we are bringing knowledge and opportunities from one part of the organization (First Steps 4K) into another, breaking down internal silos and maximizing resources.

Aligned and Strengthened the State’s Early Childhood System: Early Childhood Advisory Council

- **South Carolina’s Birth through Five Plan:** In April 2024, the ECAC reviewed the Birth through Five Plan Progress Report, and approved Birth through Five plan priorities for the remainder of 2024. This progress report included updates on needs and resource assessments, key achievements in the previous year that impact young children and their families, and priorities for 2024. The report is posted on the ECAC website, www.earlychildhoodsc.org.
- **South Carolina’s Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS):** This system initially includes the following: (1) Palmetto Drive to Five (PDt5) initiative, a state and county-level data dashboard including disaggregated early childhood program data. Currently there are 11 agencies with a total of 15 programs participating to date and (2) Early Learning Extension (ELE), an integration of early learning data from 3 entities, Head Start (22 grantees), First Steps (both 4K and Partnerships) and SC DSS Child Care Scholarships into the K-12 Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The ELE initiative also includes the establishment of a data governance framework for the ECIDS to manage all initiatives. This will include the establishment of a system-wide early childhood data request process by FY25. In FY24, the ELE and PDt5 were focused on answering Key Question #4 “How many young children are enrolled in early childhood programs?” and continuing to build out the initial data governance infrastructure. This infrastructure will be completed in December 2024 with the release of the ECIDS Data Governance Manual. Further, in FY24, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with the Harvard Strategic Data Project, awarded a two-year Strategic Data Fellowship to support data use for the South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council. In FY24, the ECAC successfully recruited a Strategic Data Fellow, Molly Tuck, who will begin in FY25.
- **First Five SC:** In FY24, working together with partner agencies across the early childhood system, the Early Childhood Advisory Council continued to add to the common application for South Carolina’s publicly funded early childhood programs, harnessing technology to dramatically improve the way families with young children get the services they want, need and deserve. In FY24, 2,383 applications have been received for child care scholarships, WIC, First Steps Local Partnership Programs, and First Steps 4K (numbers include first month of FY24). In early 2024, four school district early childhood programs were added to First Five SC for the first time (Allendale, Beaufort, York District 1, and Williamsburg). In FY25, there are plans to add at least ten more district-led programs. First Five SC was recognized in an international publication from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) entitled, “[Modernising Access to Social Protection Strategies, Technologies and Data Advances in OECD Countries](#),” as one of two innovations from the United States.
- **First Five for All:** With initial funding from the Pritzker Children’s Initiative and additional funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the ECAC is now supporting states and municipalities in building their own eligibility screener and common application for publicly funded early childhood programs, like First Five SC. This initiative, called First Five for All, consists of technical assistance, a toolkit, and national presentations. More can be found at First5forAll.org.

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- **Palmetto PreK:** South Carolina’s single portal into all publicly funded PreK programs for three- and four-year-olds continued to be promoted, further developed, and used as a mechanism for co-promotion of programs that are federally, state and locally funded and had, prior to the launch of this site in 2020, been disconnected and siloed.
- **Palmetto PreK Jamboree:** Provided training and professional development to more than 1,500 attendees across two events, representing teachers and professionals serving three- and four-year-olds from Head Start, public school, and child care including First Steps 4K providers.
- **Ready for Kindergarten: A Guide for South Carolina Families:** Was released and mailed out to school districts across the state. Informed by the Palmetto PreK Transitions working group, an interagency initiative supported by the national organization Education Commission of the States, this guide provides families with tools for easing the transition from PreK to Kindergarten, a time of significant change and opportunity for children and their parents that sets the stage for a successful start to school. The guide can be found at earlychildhoodsc.org.

Increased Engagement with and Expanded Knowledge of Families: Signature Events

- **Early Childhood Summit:** The 2023 SC Summit on Early Childhood engaged nearly 400 early childhood professionals, community leaders, policymakers and state leaders from across the early childhood system in a day-long professional development and field-building opportunity.
- **First Steps AmeriCorps’ MLK Week of Service** signature event, the 4K Read Alouds, had its biggest year yet with 194 volunteers reading in 194 locations and distributing 4,000 books.
- **Countdown to Kindergarten Summit** was attended live by 195 parents, teachers, child care providers, and community partners on April 12. Over 950 people viewed the rebroadcast on Facebook! At this free, virtual professional development opportunity, participants learned and were inspired to better support rising kindergartners and their families during the transition to school.

Maximized First Steps’ Investment in Early Childhood

- **Permanent Authorization:** Led a comprehensive effort to engage key stakeholders in the legislative process that ultimately resulted in Act 81, which was signed into law on June 19, 2023. FY24 was dedicated to developing guidance and implementing Act 81.
- **Diversified Funding Streams:** In FY24, South Carolina First Steps once again secured and successfully leveraged state, federal, private and philanthropic dollars – diversified funding streams – to ensure long-term sustainability of programs and services offered to infants, toddlers, young children and their families by South Carolina First Steps. The agency presented six requests to the General Assembly, four of which were successful. Specifically, through the state budget process, First Steps was able to secure recurring funds to address unfunded but mandatory personnel cost increases at the state level (EIA funded personnel), to obtain recurring funds to support First Steps’ separation from the State Department of Education, to obtain recurring state funds to support the work of the local partnerships, and to increase funding for First Steps 4K and the statewide expansion efforts.
- **Grantmaking:** In FY24 alone, South Carolina First Steps was able to deliver to local partnerships \$6,331,856.18 in non-state funds including private grant dollars from the Duke Endowment, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and Enterprise Holdings Foundation, competitively awarded federal funds through ESSER III (via SDE) and Preschool Development Grant Birth - Five (via DSS).
- **Fundraising:** Made full use of the nonprofit status of South Carolina First Steps, raising \$196,036 in private contributions from 143 donors including \$87,676 (net of expenses) through the organization’s signature fundraising event, Night to Celebrate Community, as well as annual appeals and online giving, and a robust tax check-off campaign. We also helped local partnerships raise an additional \$15,236 by supporting their local giving day campaigns.
- **AmeriCorps VISTA:** Pursued and successfully implemented the second year of an AmeriCorps VISTA grant award providing the agency with resources for 4 full-time, federally funded team members.
- **AmeriCorps:** Achieved 82% recruitment of AmeriCorps positions with an exceptionally high number of returning members, validating the positive experience they had in their previous term or terms of service.

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- **Staffing:** In FY24, South Carolina First Steps made significant progress toward the goal of utilizing all FTEs allocated to the agency by the legislature, most notably by retaining and / or filling vacant positions promptly. On June 30, 2024, First Steps had a 7% FTE vacancy (5/71), compared with a 9% rate on July 1, 2023 (6/68).

Continuous Quality Improvement and Customer / Client Focus

- **Your Voice Matters:** South Carolina First Steps and the Early Childhood Advisory Council continued to prioritize client and provider feedback, family voice, and user experience in the design, development, planning, and continuous quality improvement efforts of the agency. First Steps initiated a formal and nationally supported process for obtaining client feedback and making changes based on this input in 2020. Since then, First Steps has completed 20 feedback loops with clients involved in First Steps local partnership and First Steps 4K programs as well as early childhood educators and home visiting professionals. Our feedback work has won us national attention, with staff sharing findings at local and national conferences and being recognized in a case study published by Listen4Good. Through these ongoing efforts, First Steps has heard from over 6,000 individuals who have interacted with First Steps, either as a recipient or a provider of our services.
- **Family Voice Council,** a formal parent leadership group consisting of fourteen parents, grandparents and primary caregivers to young children who participate in public programs, continues to be an active and supported part of the early childhood system’s mechanism for learning from and modifying programs and services based on customer feedback. The Council is diverse in geography and lived experiences to close the gap between program and project designers and users.

Accountability and Transparency

- **South Carolina First Steps’ strategic plan** “Every Child Ready” continues to guide agency decisions including: legislative, budgetary, programmatic, and grant-making. Agency “rocks” (big, measurable, SMART goals) for 2024, team priorities, and individual objectives and evaluations are tied directly to the strategic plan, ensuring agency-wide alignment and a unified focus.
- **Quarterly data-driven implementation progress meetings** involve approximately 20 staff members who engage in cross-team data presentation and analysis to discuss the reach and impact of our agency. Programmatic, communications, grantmaking and development and research and strategy staff all participate in these meetings. To build data literacy and capacity, the research and strategy team developed data visualization guidelines and provide technical assistance to staff as they prepare their quarterly data reports.
- **Local Partnership Leadership Convening:** For the first time in its history, First Steps hosted a two-day, in-person event in June 2023 for over 100 local partnership board members and executive directors. “It Takes a Village,” was focused on fellowship, learning, and building board members’ capacity for effective board service for their local First Steps partnership.
- In FY24, First Steps completed a Request for Proposal process with the state’s Materials Management Office for the next five years of **legislatively mandated local partnership evaluations.** The selected vendor, Child Trends, has deep expertise in research and early childhood programming. The first evaluation, due in early 2025, will look at the local partnerships holistically.
- First Steps has continued to refine an **internal evaluation of First Steps 4K student outcomes.** First Steps 4K uses GOLD® by Teaching Strategies to assess children’s readiness across six domains: language, literacy, cognitive, math, physical, and social-emotional. Preliminary data show that First Steps 4K students show an improvement in their readiness in the six domains across their year in 4K. An evaluation report with findings is on track to be completed by December 2024.
- First Steps used funding from the Preschool Development Grant to contract with the Research, Evaluation, and Measurement (REM) Center at the University of South Carolina (UofSC) to **evaluate Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK),** the agency’s evidence-informed school transition program developed by First Steps in 2004. The multi-level evaluation of CTK aligns with the agency’s strategic plan (Strategy 1.4.8: “Evaluate the impact of Countdown to Kindergarten using both quantitative and qualitative

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methods”) and with the program’s goal of establishing a robust evidence base for consideration of moving the program’s designation from evidence-informed to evidence-based. Through the partnership with UofSC, staff have successfully published five scientific manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals.

- To ensure continuous quality improvement and process management related to First Steps Local Partnership programs, FY24 marked the release of the new **Program and Operational Guidelines**, which consists of expectations for all evidence-based and evidence-informed programs endorsed by the Board of Trustees for local partnership implementation. At the end of FY24, a project was initiated to do a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature for each program, which will result in a literature review and potentially revised evidence designation. This project will culminate in the launch of Smart Solutions SC, an online, searchable database of all available local partnership programs, in early 2025.

Dissemination and Field Building

- In FY24, First Steps staff **authored four peer-reviewed, scientific articles**
 - Fan X, D’Amico LK, Kilburn J, Jones A, Richard C, Garrett S, Leverage L. Kindergarten readiness: Associations with a summer transition program and teacher/school level factors. *Educ Res Eval*. 2024 June: 1-23.
 - D’Amico LK, Fan X, Kilburn J, Jones A, Richard C, Garrett S, Leverage L. Supporting children and families with opportunity gaps: educators’ perspectives of a summer kindergarten transition program. *Educ Res Eval*. 2024 May: 1–21.
 - Fan X, D’Amico LK, Kilburn J, Jones A, Richard C, Zollars L, Garrett S, Johnston D. Perspectives of parents and caregivers on kindergarten readiness: A focus on the impact of a summer transition program. *IJEC*. 2023 Nov: 1-29.
 - Boswell EK, Richard C, Crouch E, Jones A, Dugger R, Cordan K. Home Visiting Program Participation and Healthcare Utilization amongst Children Enrolled in South Carolina Medicaid. *J Health Visit*. 2023 Nov;11(10):422-433.
- In FY24, First Steps staff contributed to field building across many sectors, including **countless national and state-level conference presentations and webinars**. Notable highlights are listed here:
 - Richard CL, D’Amico LK, Harrison, T, Jones A, Kilburn J. (June 2024). Innovations in Kindergarten Transition: Teacher-Family Connections Prior to Kindergarten. Poster presentation at the 2024 National Research Conference on Early Childhood Meeting, Arlington, VA.
 - Galloway C and Bailey A. (June 2024) What Pushes Your Buttons? Recognizing and Addressing Your Triggers. Oral presentation at National Association for the Education of Young Children Professional Learning Institute, New Orleans, LA.
 - Moore B, Taylor T, Richard CL. (May 2024) Family-Centered Information Portals: Aligning Public Systems to Increase Access to Services. Panel presentation at Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency, Washington DC.
 - Hatton-Moore R, Roach K, McConner T, Baker L. (May 2024) Developing a Blueprint for a Two-Generation Approach. Workshop presented at Smart Start Conference, Greensboro, NC.
 - D’Amico LK, Fan X, Jones A, Kilburn J, Richard C. (April 2024) Factors associated with kindergarten readiness in language and literacy, mathematical thinking, and social foundations: An HLM approach. Poster presented at 2024 American Educational Research Association, Philadelphia, PA.
 - Kilburn J and Jones A. (March 2024) Family-Focused Kindergarten Transition Closes the Gap on Home-School Relations and School Readiness. Presentation at Nurturing Developing Minds Conference and Research Symposium, Greenville, SC.
 - Hatton-Moore R. (December 2023) Systems Aligned with Families in Mind. Oral presentation at the BUILD Conference, Los Angeles, CA.
 - Williams J and Maness B. (November 2023) It’s Not You; It’s Me: Let’s Take a Different Approach to Child Behavior. Oral presentation at National Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference, Nashville, TN.

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- D’Amico LK, Fan X Kilburn J, Jones A, Richard C, Garrett S, Leverage L. (October 2023). Using Participatory Evaluation to Understand the Implementation and Impact of a Statewide Kindergarten Transition Program. Oral presentation at Evaluation 2023 in Indianapolis, IN.
- Jones A and Richard C. (October 2023) Rewriting the Narrative - Sharing Stories Behind the Statistics. Oral presentation at Evaluation 2023 in Indianapolis, IN.
- King M, Richard CL, Vidal A. (August 2023) Integrating Early Childhood Data in South Carolina: A Journey in Data Governance. Oral presentation at 2023 NCES STATS-DC Data Conference in Washington, DC.

Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies

Should First Steps fail to meet its goals and objectives, South Carolina’s young children will be less prepared for success in school and life. But it doesn’t end there. The evidence-based strategies delivered by the initiative are documented by research to help reduce the occurrence of costly negative outcomes, including child abuse and neglect, poor health, special education placements, academic remediation, unemployment, incarceration and more. In this sense, the work of South Carolina First Steps is not only advancing the long-term success and prosperity of its clients but reducing substantial taxpayer burdens associated with a host of undesirable outcomes. To promote success and mitigate against these negative outcomes, First Steps requires the ongoing support of its public and private partners, Governor Henry McMaster, and the SC General Assembly.

To better ensure the success of South Carolina’s children at-risk for early school failure, policymakers might consider expanding the resources made available to First Steps Local Partnerships – allowing for the expansion of evidence-based early childhood interventions proven to impact the long-term success and prosperity of their participants. Continuing to increase the reach of 4K is also a key lever in addressing early school failure.

During FY25, First Steps will experience a significant funding cliff with the ending of two competitively awarded federal fund sources: American Rescue Plan funding through ESSER III (via SC Department of Education; ends September 30, 2024) and Preschool Development Grant Birth - Five (via SC Department of Social Services (DSS); ends December 30, 2024). These funding cliffs will significantly reduce the amount of program funding available for discretionary grants to local First Steps partnerships, which in turn will result in the loss of program staff and the number of children and families benefitting from services starting July 1, 2025. While South Carolina has submitted a renewal application for the next three-year Preschool Development Grant Birth - Five (via DSS; proposed award date October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2027), the funding available per award from the federal government is significantly less than in years’ past. First Steps is working on plans to leverage its public-private partnership status to mitigate the impact of this funding cliff on its partners. Key pieces of those plans include a state budget request and an exciting partnership with the Department of Social Services to leverage federal Family First Prevention Services Act funds to maintain and expand the reach of Parents as Teachers, First Steps’ largest evidence-based, intensive home visiting program.

First Steps’ success is also dependent on the continued support of the Early Childhood Advisory Council and its partners. First Steps cannot improve kindergarten readiness alone, and it is incumbent upon the early childhood system to work together to move the needle for young children. In fall 2023, 41% of South Carolina’s kindergartners arrived at school ready, which is better than they were doing pre-pandemic and the highest proportion to date. However, disparities persist for kindergartners of color, those who live in low-income households, those with disabilities, and those whose primary language spoken at home is not English. Recurring, targeted investment in rural communities and communities with historically low Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores is one tool to help close these achievement gaps that can persist well into later school and life.

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AGENCY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



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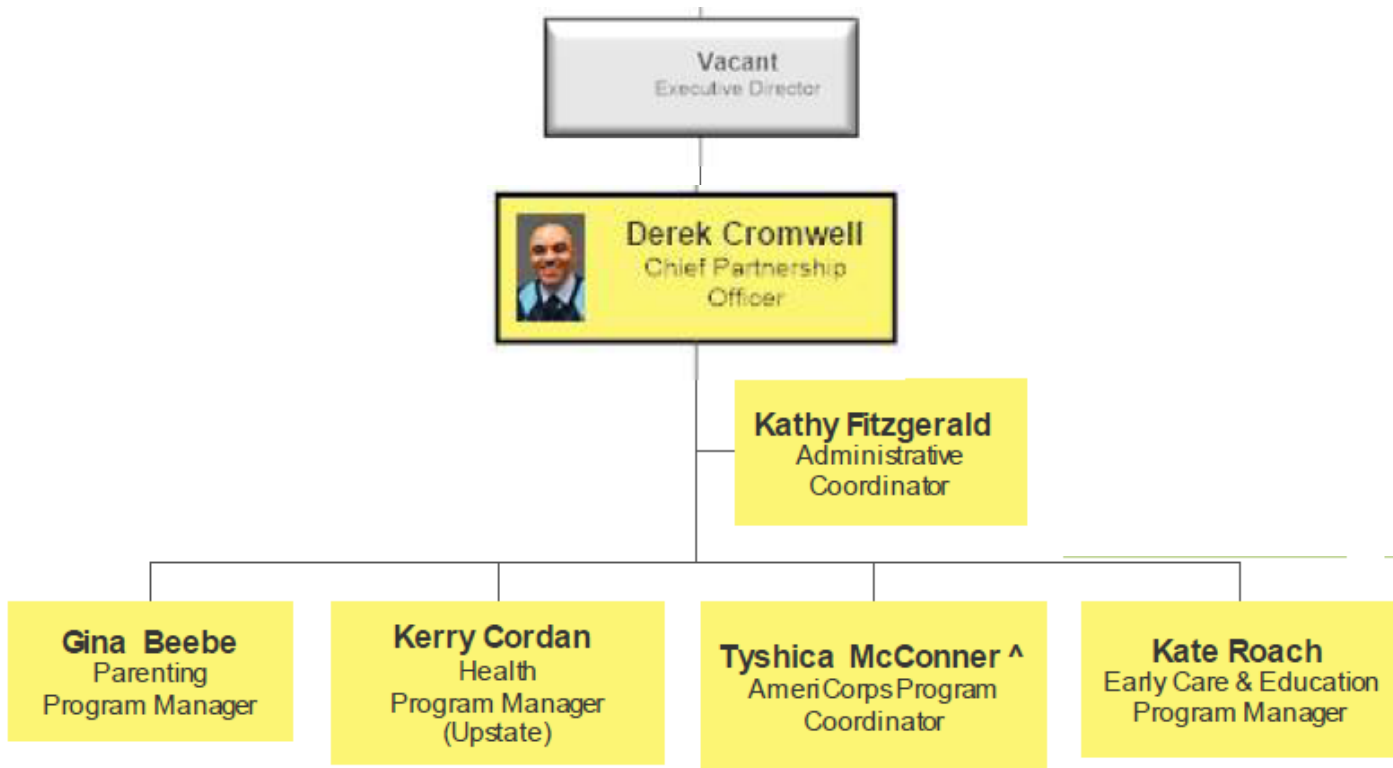
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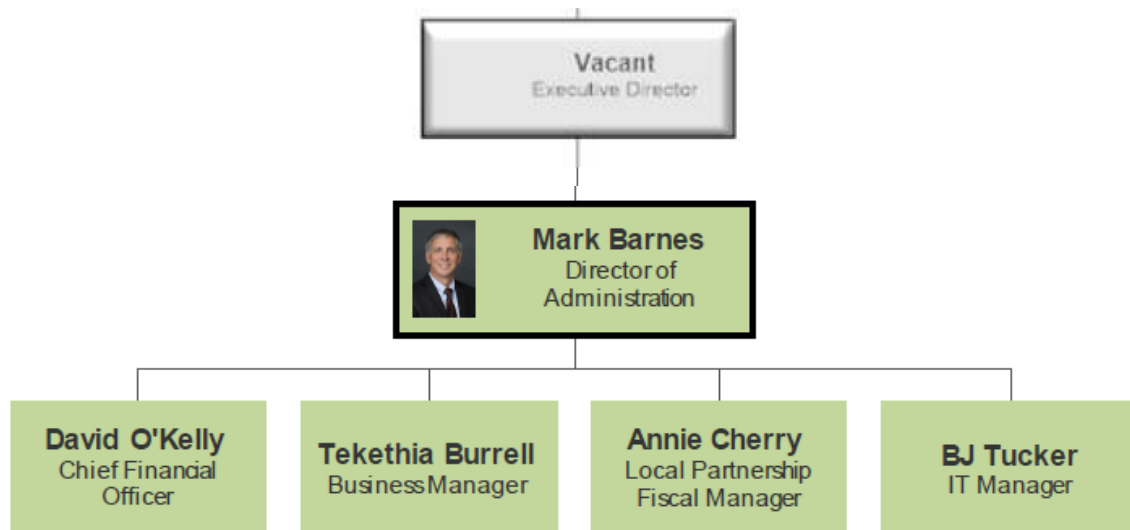
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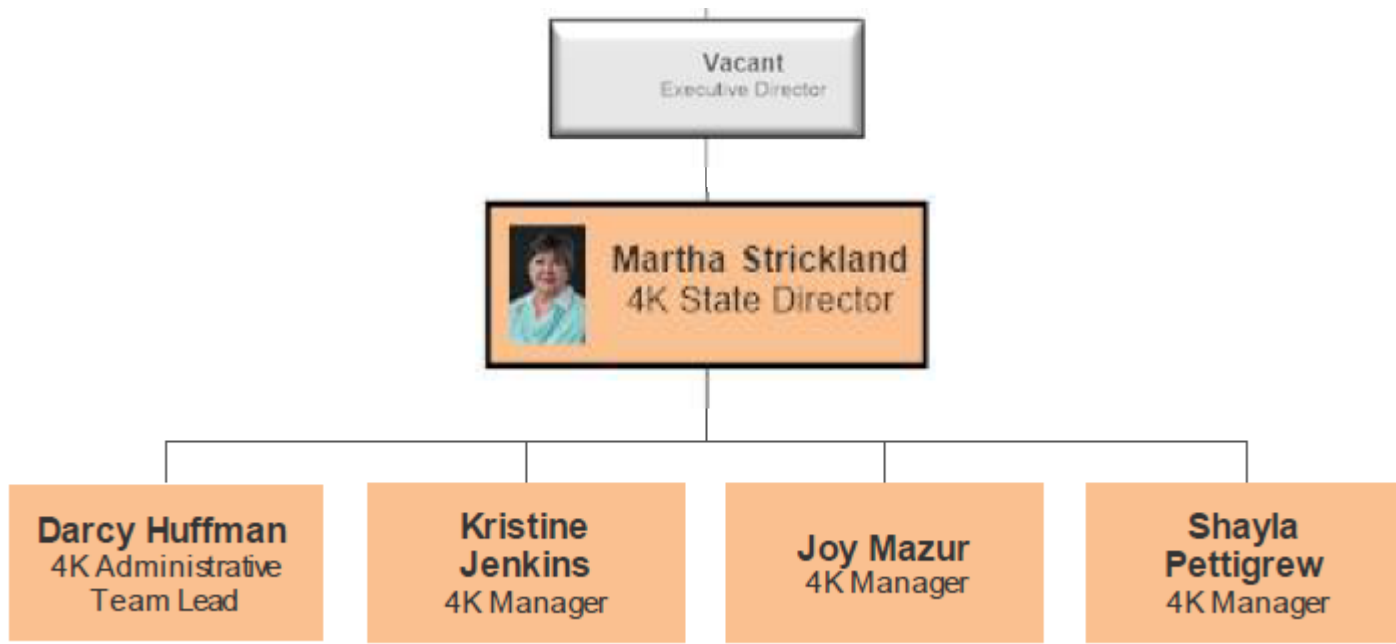
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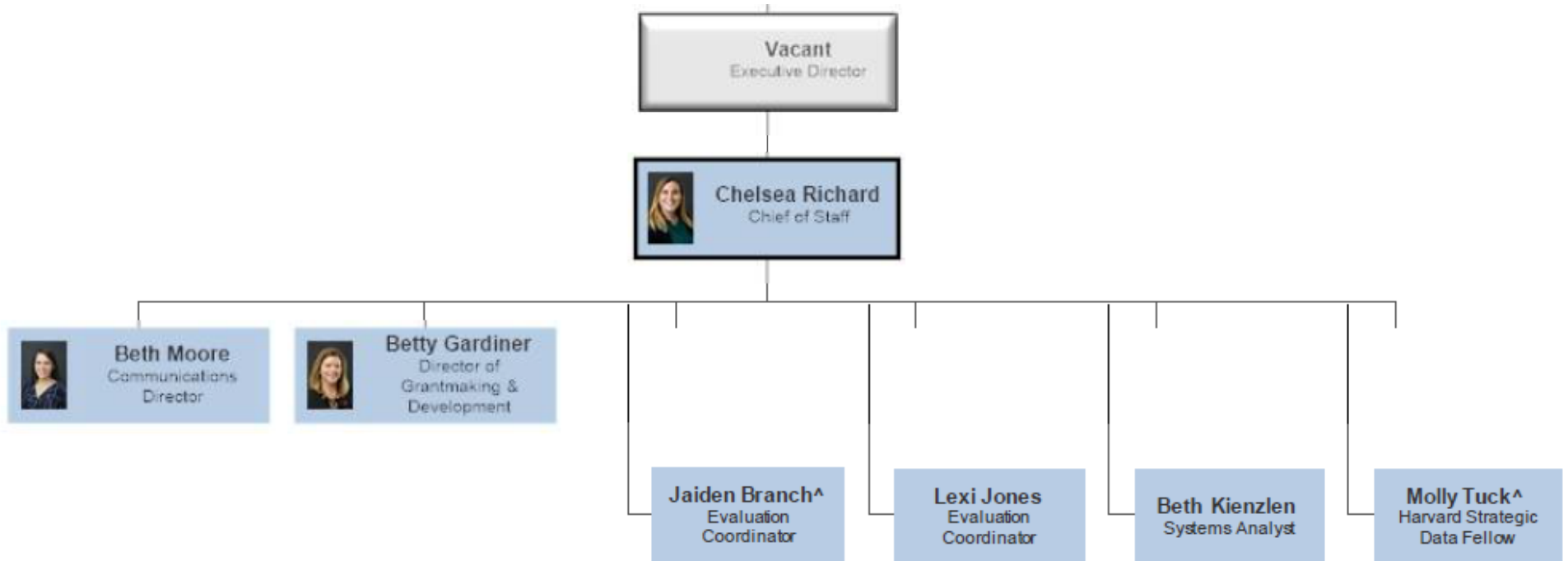
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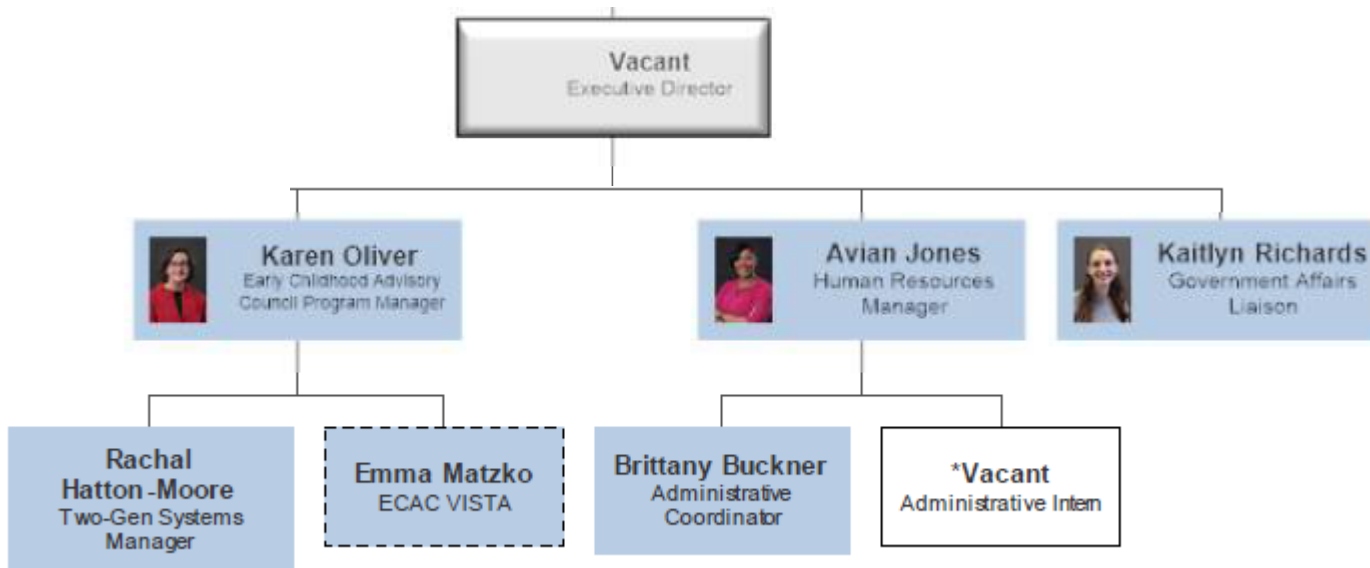
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Organizational Chart



2024

Reorganization and Compliance

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

H620 - SC First Steps to School Readiness

Primary Contact

First Name	Last Name	Role/Title	Email Address	Phone
Chelsea	Richard	Chief of Staff	Crichard@scfirststeps.org	803-734-1620

Secondary Contact

First Name	Last Name	Role/Title	Email Address	Phone
Mark	Barnes	Interim Executive Director	Mbarnes@scfirststeps.org	803-734-8079

Agency Mission

Adopted in:

2019

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.

Agency Vision

Adopted in:

2019

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

Recommendations for reorganization requiring legislative change:

Proviso 1.97 (from FY2023-24) required the agency to develop a plan to operate independently from the State Department of Education. In FY2024-25, the agency is implementing that plan with support from several other agencies.

Agency intentions for other major reorganization to divisions, departments, or programs to allow the agency to operate more effectively and efficiently in the succeeding fiscal year:

None

Significant events related to the agency that occurred in FY2024

Description of Event	Start	End	Agency Measures Impacted	Other Impacts
First Steps developing plan to operate independently from the State Department of Education.	July	June	By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase to 20%.	Improved administrative efficiency
Third year of statewide expansion of First Steps 4K	July	June	Increase student enrollment within the First Steps 4K program by 10% annually.	
Second year of Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) funding deployed through targeted and competitive grants to local partnerships	July	June	By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps high intensity programs will increase from 5% to 8%.	
First full year of first-in-the-nation First5SC common application	July	June	Receive 1,800 applications through FirstFiveSC common application portal.	
Second year of First Steps' AmeriCorps VISTA program	July	June	Recruit 52 service-minded adults throughout targeted communities in SC to serve as AmeriCorps and VISTA Members or Interns at First Steps supporting local and state First Steps programs annually.	

First Steps celebrates 25th anniversary.	June	June	By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase to 20%.	
Ceremonial bill signing with Governor Henry McMaster for permanent authorization of First Steps.	August	August	By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase to 20%.	
Is the agency in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 2-1-220, which requires submission of certain reports to the Legislative Services Agency for publication online and the State Library? (See also S.C. Code Ann. § 60-2-20).				Yes
Reason agency is out of compliance: (if applicable)				
Is the agency in compliance with various requirements to transfer its records, including electronic ones, to the Department of Archives and History? See the Public Records Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 30-1-10 through 30-1-180) and the South Carolina Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 26-6-10 through 26-10-210).				Yes
Does the law allow the agency to promulgate regulations?				Yes
Law number(s) which gives the agency the authority to promulgate regulations:	Section 59-152-90			
Has the agency promulgated any regulations?				No
Is the agency in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-120 (J), which requires an agency to conduct a formal review of its regulations every five years?				Yes
(End of Reorganization and Compliance Section)				

Strategic Plan Results

FY2024

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

H620 - SC First Steps to School Readiness

- Goal 1** Families are supported as their child's first and most important teachers.
- Goal 2** Families can access and afford high quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of their children and families
- Goal 3** Disparities in educational, developmental, and health outcomes for children of color and from low-income families are reduced
- Goal 4** The early childhood state system works collaboratively, aligning resources, strategy, and focus across agencies to benefit young children and their families

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Actual	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
1.1 Provide parents with access to support and resources that strengthen their families; build their confidence, knowledge and skills; and promote the optimal development of their children.														
State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families														
1.1.1	Across high-intensity parenting programs, at least 50% of families will show improvement in parent-child interaction.	52%	50%	35%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	HFPI results in parent-child interaction domain across all parenting programs, where available, per fiscal year; those improving from >40 at baseline to above at post-test	First Steps Data Collection System	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs - all data are owned by First Steps	Family outcomes will improve through high-intensity interventions.	Families served by high intensity programs through First Steps Local Partnerships.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	Need to increase proportion of post-assessments that are completed on time to reach target
1.2 Increase the number of families participating in evidence-based and evidence-informed parenting programs.														
State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families														
1.2.1	By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase to 20%.	37%	20%	46%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Numerator: Estimated number of children served directly, excluding those served in quality enhancement, training, community education, and convener from Local Partnership matrix, plus 4K; Denominator: Children under age 6 <185% FPL from American Community Survey 5-year estimates	First Steps Data Collection System + ChildPlus	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being directly served by First Steps.	Children served directly by First Steps 4K and Local Partnerships.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.2.2	By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps high intensity programs will increase from 5% to 8%.	8%	8%	8%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Numerator: Estimated number of children served directly in high intensity programs from Local Partnership matrix, plus 4K; Denominator: Children under age 6 <185% FPL from American Community Survey 5-year estimates	First Steps Data Collection System + ChildPlus	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being directly served by First Steps.	Children served by high intensity programs through First Steps 4K and Local Partnerships.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.3 Maximize parent and family knowledge, choice and engagement in their child's early learning and development. Engage in public information campaigns and parent outreach efforts to promote and educate about available options.														
State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families														

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Actual	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
1.3.1	Increase SC First Steps, Palmetto Pre-K, and ECAC social media followers by 5% annually.	10,425	10,946	11,575	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Cumulative number of followers across platforms	Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/scfirststeps; https://www.facebook.com/palmettoprek), Twitter (https://twitter.com/SCFirstSteps), Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/SCFIRSTSTEP S/)	On each website	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.3.2	Increase leads generated from Palmetto Pre-K by 5% annually.	7,257	7,620	7,065	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Number of leads reported by Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	Reduced marketing spend, due to procurement challenges, in July and August 2023 likely contributed to not meeting this target
1.3.3	Receive 6,300 leads through FirstFiveSC.	10,023	6,300	9,888	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Number of leads reported by Google Analytics; Leads are families who complete the eligibility screener and are eligible for at least one program or service.	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.3.4	Receive 1,800 applications through FirstFiveSC common application portal.	0	1,800	2,383	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Number of applications reported by Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.1	Expand statewide the geographic reach and enrollment in state-funded, full-day 4-year-old Kindergarten available at no charge for eligible children in public schools, private schools and private child care centers.										State Objective: Education, Training, and Human Development			
2.1.1	On Day 45 of the school year, 60% of licensed, approved 4K slots will be filled.	67%	60%	65%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	Other	Numerator: students enrolled on Day 45; denominator: licensed capacity of active centers on Day 45	ChildPlus	ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.1.2	Increase student enrollment within the First Steps 4K program by 10% annually.	3,650	4,015	4,119	Count	Equal to or greater than	Other	Total students served through day 180	ChildPlus	ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.1.3	Increase the number of classrooms offering First Steps 4K to meet student enrollment goal.	280	257	333	Count	Equal to or greater than	Other	Number of classrooms at average of 12 students per classroom	Program records	Housed at First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Actual	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
2.1.4	Increase the proportion of families that would "highly recommend" First Steps 4K to a friend or family member.	84%	90%	88%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	Other	Percentage scoring 9 or 10 to the question, "How likely is it that you would recommend First Steps 4K to a friend or family member?" on a scale of 0 to 10	SurveyMonkey	SurveyMonkey is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K. Family feedback will be utilized in continuous quality improvement processes.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	We are proud of the improvement over FY23 and will continue to work to improve this important metric
2.1.5	85% of students enrolled on day 45 will still be enrolled on day 135.	88%	85%	88%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	Other	Proportion of students enrolled on day 135 who were also enrolled on day 45	ChildPlus	ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.2	Engage early care and education programs and providers in training, quality enhancement, and coaching, equipping them with the skills and resources to promote positive child development.										State Objective: Education, Training, and Human Development			
2.2.1	Increase the availability of high quality early care and education opportunities offered by First Steps: By 2025, the percentage of children under age 6 who benefit from First Steps quality enhancement and training efforts will increase to 15%.	19%	15%	24%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Numerator: Estimated number of children in centers where quality enhancement and training have occurred from Local Partnership matrix + 4K students; Denominator: Children under age 6 for whom poverty status is known from American Community Survey 5-year estimates	Local partnership numbers served matrix/ChildPlus	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in high quality child care.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.2.2	Provide professional development: The number of hours of intensive, on-site technical assistance for child care providers through Quality Enhancement/Quality Counts via local partnerships and estimated 4K coaching hours will increase by 2% annually.	32,241	32,886	37,474	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Hours of on-site technical assistance provided to child care centers participating in intensive facility quality enhancement efforts (via local partnerships), plus estimated 4K coaching hours (8 hours per month of total centers enrolled through day 180 for 8 months)	Local partnership numbers served matrix/4K program records	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in high quality child care.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.2.3	Provide professional development: The number of certified and registered training hours provided to child care providers via local partnerships and annual First Steps 4K Teacher and Leadership academies will increase by 2% annually.	1,476	1,506	1,004	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Certified and registered child care training hours via local partnerships, plus total hours of 4K leadership and teacher academies	Local partnership numbers served matrix/4K program records	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; 4K program records are housed/maintained at First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in high quality child care.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	Increased utilization of virtual training by local partnerships allows them to reach their target number of providers trained but at the expense of the number of hours offered, which is what this measure is focused on
3.1	Expand reach by implementing a service delivery system that includes both programs that are intensive and targeted plus those that are light-touch and have a broader reach										State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families			

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Actual	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
3.1.1	Of those entities that received discretionary grant funding from SC First Steps to expand service reach in underserved communities, 80% will reach their service targets annually.	75%	80%	91%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Proportion of service targets reached for grants with at least 9 months of funding during fiscal year	First Steps Data Collection System/Program records	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; other relevant Local Partnership program records are housed/maintained at First Steps or at the Local Partnership - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being served by First Steps.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
3.1.2	Recruit 52 service-minded adults throughout targeted communities in SC to serve as AmeriCorps and VISTA Members or Interns at First Steps supporting local and state First Steps programs annually.	41	52	48	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Number of AmeriCorps and VISTA members and interns recruited	Program records	All AmeriCorps and VISTA program records are housed, maintained, and owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being served by First Steps. Adult outcomes will improve through voluntary service via AmeriCorps.	All children and adults in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	Transition in leadership at First Steps at the beginning of the members' service year and cuts to federal funding (VISTA specific) impacted our ability to reach this target
3.1.3	Following their initial year of service, 50% of AmeriCorps members and interns will return for a second year of service, get a job, or enroll in school.	72%	50%	72%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	AmeriCorps and VISTA members who return to service, get a job, or enroll in school/AmeriCorps members in program year	Program records	All AmeriCorps and VISTA program records are housed, maintained, and owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being served by First Steps. Adult outcomes will improve through voluntary service via AmeriCorps.	All children and adults in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
3.2 Set benchmarks using disaggregated data to track progress in reducing disparities of specific target groups										State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families				
3.2.1	Reduce the racial/ethnic gap 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/Hispanic Kindergartners will reduce by 1% each year to 15%.	19%	16%	19%	Percent	Equal to or less than	Other	(Numerator: white Kindergartners "Demonstrating Readiness"; Denominator: Total white Kindergartners assessed with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment)-(Numerator: Black and Hispanic Kindergartners "Demonstrating Readiness"; Denominator: Total Black and Hispanic Kindergartners assess with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment)	Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	All children should arrive at kindergarten ready, regardless of race or ethnicity.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	Transition in leadership at First Steps at the beginning of the members' service year and cuts to federal funding (VISTA specific) impacted our ability to reach this target

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Actual	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
3.2.2	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 3% each year to 47%.	38%	42%	41%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	Other	Provided in Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	All children should arrive at kindergarten ready.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	This one year target is based on our five year goal, which we set before the COVID-19 pandemic and have not changed. In fall 2023, kindergarten readiness reached an all time high in South Carolina, even higher than pre-COVID. While projections are favorable, there is still considerable work to be done.
4.1 Develop and implement an ongoing process for communicating across the early childhood state system														
State Objective: Government and Citizens														
4.1.1	Grow SCFS and ECAC contact lists 10% annually.	10,408	11,449	12,921	Count	Equal to or greater than	Other	Number of contacts	Robly, Raiser's Edge	Robly, Raiser's Edge	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
4.1.2	Increase website traffic to scfirststeps.org, countdownsc.org, free4ksc.org, firstfivesc.org, palmettoprek.org, and earlychildhoodsc.org by 5% annually.	442,504	464,629	500,182	Count	Equal to or greater than	Other	Cumulative unique visitors	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	

FY2025

Strategic Plan Development

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

H620 - SC First Steps to School Readiness

- Goal 1** Families are supported as their child's first and most important teachers.
- Goal 2** Families can access and afford high quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of their children and families
- Goal 3** Disparities in educational, developmental, and health outcomes for children of color and from low-income families are reduced
- Goal 4** The early childhood state system works collaboratively, aligning resources, strategy, and focus across agencies to benefit young children and their families

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
1.1 Provide parents with access to support and resources that strengthen their families; build their confidence, knowledge and skills; and promote the optimal development of their children.													
State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families													
1.1.1	Using a weighted proportion across high-intensity parenting programs, at least 40% of families will show improvement in parent-child interaction.	40%	40%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	HFPI results in parent-child interaction domain across all parenting programs, where available, per fiscal year; weighted proportion of those improving from below average at baseline to at/above average at 6 months of enrollment and those improving from at average at baseline to above average at 6 months of enrollment	First Steps Data Collection System	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs - all data are owned by First Steps	Family outcomes will improve through high-intensity interventions.	Families served by high intensity programs through First Steps Local Partnerships.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.2 Increase the number of families participating in evidence-based and evidence-informed parenting programs.													
State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families													
1.2.1	By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase to 20%.	46%	20%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Numerator: Estimated number of children served directly, excluding those served in quality enhancement, training, community education, and convener from Local Partnership matrix, plus 4K; Denominator: Children under age 6 <185% FPL from American Community Survey 5-year estimates	First Steps Data Collection System + ChildPlus	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being directly served by First Steps.	Children served directly by First Steps 4K and Local Partnerships.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.2.2	By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps high intensity programs will increase from 5% to 8%.	8%	8%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Numerator: Estimated number of children served directly in high intensity programs from Local Partnership matrix, plus 4K; Denominator: Children under age 6 <185% FPL from American Community Survey 5-year estimates	First Steps Data Collection System + ChildPlus	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being directly served by First Steps.	Children served by high intensity programs through First Steps 4K and Local Partnerships.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.3 Maximize parent and family knowledge, choice and engagement in their child's early learning and development. Engage in public information campaigns and parent outreach efforts to promote and educate about available options.													
State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families													

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
1.3.1	Increase SC First Steps, Palmetto Pre-K, and ECAC social media followers by 5% annually to 12,154 for FY25.	11,575	12,154	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Cumulative number of followers across platforms	Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/scfirststeps; https://www.facebook.com/palmettoprek), Twitter (https://twitter.com/SCFirstSteps), Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/SCFIRSTSTEPS/)	On each website	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.3.2	Increase leads generated from Palmetto Pre-K by 5% annually to 7,418 for FY25.	7,065	7,418	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Number of leads reported by Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.3.3	Receive 6,615 leads through FirstFiveSC in FY25.	9,888	6,615	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Number of leads reported by Google Analytics; Leads are families who complete the eligibility screener and are eligible for at least one program or service.	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
1.3.4	Receive 1,890 applications through FirstFiveSC common application portal in FY25.	2,383	1,890	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Number of applications reported by Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.1	Expand statewide the geographic reach and enrollment in state-funded, full-day 4-year-old Kindergarten available at no charge for eligible children in public schools, private schools and private child care centers.										State Objective: Education, Training, and Human Development		
2.1.1	On Day 45 of the school year, 60% of licensed, approved 4K slots will be filled.	65%	60%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	Other	Numerator: students enrolled on Day 45; denominator: licensed capacity of active centers on Day 45	ChildPlus	ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.1.2	Increase student enrollment within the First Steps 4K program by 10% annually to 4,531 for FY25.	4,119	4,531	Count	Equal to or greater than	Other	Total students served through day 180	ChildPlus	ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.1.3	Increase the number of classrooms offering First Steps 4K to meet student enrollment goal to 290 for FY25.	333	290	Count	Equal to or greater than	Other	Number of classrooms at average of 12 students per classroom	Program records	Housed at First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
2.1.4	90% of families would "highly recommend" First Steps 4K to a friend or family member.	88%	90%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	Other	Percentage scoring 9 or 10 to the question, "How likely is it that you would recommend First Steps 4K to a friend or family member?" on a scale of 0-10	SurveyMonkey	SurveyMonkey is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K. Family feedback will be utilized in continuous quality improvement processes.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.1.5	85% of First Steps 4K students enrolled on day 45 will still be enrolled on day 135.	88%	85%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	Other	Proportion of students enrolled on day 135 who were also enrolled on day 45	ChildPlus	ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in First Steps 4K.	Children eligible for First Steps 4K.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.2 Engage early care and education programs and providers in training, quality enhancement, and coaching, equipping them with the skills and resources to promote positive child development. State Objective: Education, Training, and Human Development													
2.2.1	Increase the availability of high quality early care and education opportunities offered by First Steps: By 2025, the percentage of children under age 6 who benefit from First Steps quality enhancement and training efforts will increase to 15%.	24%	15%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Numerator: Estimated number of children in centers where quality enhancement and training have occurred from Local Partnership matrix + 4K students; Denominator: Children under age 6 for whom poverty status is known from American Community Survey 5-year estimates	Local partnership numbers served matrix/ChildPlus	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in high quality child care.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.2.2	Provide professional development: The number of hours of intensive, on-site technical assistance for child care providers through Child Care Technical Assistance and Coaching/Quality Counts via local partnerships and estimated 4K coaching hours will increase by 2% annually to 38,223 for FY25.	37,474	38,223	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Hours of on-site technical assistance provided to child care centers participating in intensive facility quality enhancement efforts (via local partnerships), plus estimated 4K coaching hours (8 hours per month of total centers enrolled through day 180 for 8 months)	Local partnership numbers served matrix/4K program records	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; ChildPlus is licensed by First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in high quality child care.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
2.2.3	Provide professional development: The number of certified and registered training hours provided to early care and education professionals via local partnerships and First Steps 4K will increase by 2% annually to 1,024 for FY25.	1,004	1,024	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Certified and registered child care training hours via local partnerships, plus total hours of 4K PD offered throughout year	Local partnership numbers served matrix/4K program records	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; 4K program records are housed/maintained at First Steps - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve when they enroll in high quality child care.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
3.1 Expand reach by implementing a service delivery system that includes both programs that are intensive and targeted plus those that are light-touch and have a broader reach State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families													

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
3.1.1	Of those entities that received discretionary grant funding from SC First Steps to expand service reach in underserved communities, 80% will reach their service targets annually.	91%	80%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Proportion of service targets reached for grants with at least 9 months of funding during fiscal year	First Steps Data Collection System/Program records	First Steps Data Collection System is owned by First Steps and housed/maintained by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs; other relevant Local Partnership program records are housed/maintained at First Steps or at the Local Partnership - all data are owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being served by First Steps.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
3.1.2	Recruit 40 service-minded adults throughout targeted communities in SC to serve as AmeriCorps and VISTA Members or Interns at First Steps supporting local and state First Steps programs annually.	48	40	Count	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	Number of AmeriCorps and VISTA members and interns recruited	Program records	All AmeriCorps and VISTA program records are housed, maintained, and owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being served by First Steps. Adult outcomes will improve through voluntary service via AmeriCorps.	All children and adults in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
3.1.3	Following their initial year of service, 50% of AmeriCorps members and interns will return for a second year of service, get a job, or enroll in school.	72%	50%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	State fiscal year	AmeriCorps and VISTA members who return to service, get a job, or enroll in school/AmeriCorps members in program year	Program records	All AmeriCorps and VISTA program records are housed, maintained, and owned by First Steps	Child outcomes will improve by being served by First Steps. Adult outcomes will improve through voluntary service via AmeriCorps.	All children and adults in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
3.2 Set benchmarks using disaggregated data to track progress in reducing disparities of specific target groups												State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families	
3.2.1	Reduce the racial/ethnic gap 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/Hispanic Kindergartners will reduce by 1% each year to 15%.	19%	15%	Percent	Equal to or less than	Other	(Numerator: white Kindergartners "Demonstrating Readiness"; Denominator: Total white Kindergartners assessed with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment)- (Numerator: Black and Hispanic Kindergartners "Demonstrating Readiness"; Denominator: Total Black and Hispanic Kindergartners assessed with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment)	Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	All children should arrive at kindergarten ready, regardless of race or ethnicity.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
3.2.2	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 3% each year to 47%.	41%	47%	Percent	Equal to or greater than	Other	Provided in Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	Education Oversight Committee KRA Report	All children should arrive at kindergarten ready.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	
4.1 Develop and implement an ongoing process for communicating across the early childhood state system												State Objective: Government and Citizens	
4.1.1	Grow SCFS and ECAC contact lists 10% annually to 14,213 contacts for FY25.	12,921	14,213	Count	Equal to or greater than	Other	Number of contacts	Robly, Raiser's Edge	Robly, Raiser's Edge	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	

Perf. Measure Number	Description	Base	Target	Value Type	Desired Outcome	Time Applicable	Calculation Method	Data Source	Data Location	Stakeholder Need Satisfied	Primary Stakeholder	State Funded Program Number Responsible	Notes
4.1.2	Increase website traffic to scfirststeps.org, countdownsc.org, free4ksc.org, firstfive.org, palmettoprek.org, and earlychildhoodsc.org by 5% annually to 525,191 unique visitors for FY25.	500,182	525,191	Count	Equal to or greater than	Other	Cumulative unique visitors	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Child outcomes will improve when families and providers have access to resources.	All children in South Carolina.	3500.100100.000; 4400.920100.000; 4400.920500X000; 4400.921000X000; 44NW.991800X000; 8200.010000.000; 8200.100000X000	

2024

Budget Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

H620 - SC First Steps to School Readiness

State Funded Program No.	State Funded Program Title	Description of State Funded Program	(Actual) General	(Actual) Other	(Actual) Federal	(Actual) Total	(Projected) General	(Projected) Other	(Projected) Federal	(Projected) Total
8200.010000.000	First Steps To Sch Readiness	Policy and Accountability Private Funds	\$ 436,051.00	\$ 3,425,934.00	\$ 358,696.00	\$ 4,220,681.00	\$ 2,713,270.00	\$ 2,395,538.00	\$ -	\$ 5,108,808.00
8200.100000X000	CDEPP - Private	General Funds for 4K	\$ 10,673,059.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,673,059.00	\$ 12,397,049.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 12,397,049.00
8200.250000X000	READY	READY Program - General	\$ 2,350,248.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,350,248.00	\$ 5,121,868.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,121,868.00
4400.920100.000	First Steps to School Readiness	First Steps and ECAC	\$ (5,382.00)	\$ 5,350,625.00	\$ 7,117,523.00	\$ 12,462,766.00	\$ 1,118,005.00	\$ 6,751,920.00	\$ 1,974,365.00	\$ 9,844,290.00
4400.920500X000	County Partnerships	Local Partnership Funding	\$ -	\$ 14,435,232.00	\$ -	\$ 14,435,232.00	\$ -	\$ 14,435,232.00	\$ -	\$ 14,435,232.00
4400.921000X000	CDEPP	EIA Funds for 4K	\$ -	\$ 23,792,086.00	\$ -	\$ 23,792,086.00	\$ -	\$ 27,281,490.00	\$ -	\$ 27,281,490.00
3501.050000.000	SUPPORT OPERATIONS	SUPPORT OPERATIONS	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 122,602.00	\$ 122,602.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 655,409.00	\$ 655,409.00
3500.100100.000	Office of First Steps to School Readiness	READY Grant Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
			\$ 13,453,976.00	\$ 47,003,877.00	\$ 7,598,821.00	\$ 68,056,674.00	\$ 21,350,192.00	\$ 50,864,180.00	\$ 2,629,774.00	\$ 74,844,146.00

2024

Legal Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

H620 - SC First Steps to School Readiness

Law number	Jurisdiction	Type	Description	Purpose the law serves:	Notes:	Changes made during FY2024
§59-152-10 through §59-152-160	State	Statute	The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness is a comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through local partnerships, public and private funds, and support for high-quality early childhood development and education services for children by providing support for their families' efforts toward enabling their children to reach school ready to succeed. The organization was created as a tax exempt organization under section 501 (c)(3) with Act 99 in 1999. Statute was updated in 2014 and again in 2018 with several changes. Modifications included a long range plan requirement, changes to the membership of the Board of Trustees, and direction in relation to allocation funding for local partnerships and others. Statute allows all funds received by SC First Steps to carry forward if unspent.	Requires a service		No Change
§59-156-110	State	Statute	Statute spells out the responsibilities for the State Department of Education and SC First Steps to School Readiness for the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program, or the states 4 year old kindergarten program. The statute restates much of the content in provisos included in the SFY 2015 appropriations act. Statute was updated in 2014 and in 2018.	Requires a service	High-quality early childhood development and education service	No Change
§63-11-1710 thru 1750	State	Statute	Statute creates the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees whose purpose is to oversee the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative, a broad range of innovative early childhood development and education, family support, health services, and prevention efforts to meet critical needs of South Carolina's children through the awarding of grants to partnerships at the county level as provided for in Section 59-152-90. Statute was created in Act 361 in 2008. Act also creates the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council. This council is formed to fulfill the responsibilities under 42 U.S.C. Section 9837b(b)(1)(D)(i) of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. Act was modified in 2014 and 2018 with a number of modifications. In 2014 the changes include the addition of the Early Childhood Advisory Council responsibilities and additional BabyNet responsibilities. In 2018, additional reporting requirements and a 7 year reauthorization of the agency. BabyNet was moved to DHHS per Executive Order effective June 30, 2017. In 2023, the act was modified to include additional members on the Council and update the Council's responsibilities, adding two additional duties.	Requires a service		No Change

Law number	Jurisdiction	Type	Description	Purpose the law serves:	Notes:	Changes made during FY2024
PL 110-134	Federal	Statute	Federal Head Start Act, governing operations of Early Head Start Program	Requires a service	High-quality early childhood development and education service	No Change
Proviso 1A.44 (SDE-EIA: CDEPP Student Information and Reporting)	State	FY 24-25 Proviso	State Department of Education and SC First Steps to School Readiness required to acquire unique student numbers and report that. SDE and First Steps required to provide information to Education Oversight Committee.	Report our agency must/may provide		Reenacted
Proviso 1A.9	State	FY 24-25 Proviso	Proviso directs payment of teacher supply funds to individuals, including teachers serving in private First Steps 4K classrooms.	Funding agency deliverable(s)	Reimbursement rate was increased.	Amended
Proviso 1A.9	State	FY22-23 Proviso	Proviso directs payment of teacher supply funds to individuals, including teachers serving in private First Steps 4K classrooms.	Distribute funding to another entity		No Change
Provisos 1.47 and 1A.26 (SDE: Full Day 4K)	State	FY 24-25 Proviso	Companion provisos (General Fund and EIA) set the funding, payment guidance, and geographical parameters of the SC Early Reading and Child Development Program per Act 284 which included Read to Succeed. Requires payments to the EOC annually. Proviso allows SC First Steps to deliver CERDEP 4K program in military child care centers monitored by the US Department of Defense. Proviso authorizes First Steps to create a pilot program with up to \$2,000,000 for higher reimbursement rates, and up to \$100,000 through which grants of up to \$30,000 may be awarded for the purpose of creating new 4K classroom enrollment capacity in underserved communities. In addition, if funding is available, funds may be used to extend the day up to 8 1/2 hours, and the year up to 220 days. \$1 million can be used for Public Private Partnerships that serve multi counties and multi districts for building renovations and designs to increase student enrollment. Identifies specific reports that have to be delivered related to the activities specified in the proviso.	Requires a service	Previously Provisos 1.48 and 1A.26: FY 23-24. Changes include an expansion of the scope for EOC's annual evaluation of CERDEP, directing the Dept. of Education to provide additional data related to four-years-old served.	Amended

Law number	Jurisdiction	Type	Description	Purpose the law serves:	Notes:	Changes made during FY2024
Provisos 1.57 and 1A.29 (SDE: Full Day 4K)	State	FY21 Proviso	Companion provisos (General Fund and EIA) set the funding and geographical parameters of the SC Early Reading and Child Development Program per Act 284 which included Read to Succeed.	Requires a manner of delivery	High-quality early childhood development and education service	No Change
Title 12-6-5060	State	Statute	Creates tax check off donation to the First Steps to School Readiness Fund.	Funding agency deliverable(s)		No Change
Proviso 1.84 (SDE: READY Program)	State	FY 24-25 Proviso	Creates new grant program for SC First Steps and establishes that the funds appropriated will be awarded to the Local Partnerships through a competitive and targeted grants process. Establishes the priorities and restricts amount for each partnership and the amount used by SC First Steps to administer, monitor and evaluate the program. It also requires an annual report on the state's investment in early learning and development.	Requires a service	Previously Proviso 1.88: FY 23-24.	Amended Proviso Number Only
Proviso 1.97 (SDE: First Steps Transfer Plan)	State	FY23-24 Proviso	First Steps shall work with other state entities to develop a plan to operate independently from the Department of Education.	Report our agency may/must provide		No Change
§63-11-1726	State	Statute	Statute prompts all publicly funded early childhood-serving agencies and entities to participate in data-sharing initiatives supported by the Early Childhood Advisory Council in furtherance of the Council's duties.	Requires a manner of delivery		No Change
Proviso 1.109 (SDE: First Steps Division)	State	FY 24-25 Proviso	Effective July 1, 2024, SC First Steps is authorized to operate independently from the Department of Education.	Not related to agency deliverable.		Added

2024

Services Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:
H620 - SC First Steps to School Readiness

Description of Service	Description of Direct Customer	Customer Name	Others Impacted by Service	Division or major organizational unit providing the service.	Description of division or major organizational unit providing the service.	Primary negative impact if service not provided.	Changes made to services during FY2024	Summary of changes to services
Oversight of the finances and programming of 46 local First Steps partnerships.	Approximately 341,000+ children under age 6	Children under age 6	Families (adult family members and siblings); child care providers; other local early childhood partners and service providers	Early Childhood Services; Policy and Accountability	SC First Steps serves as a grantor and provides oversight and technical assistance to 46 local non-profit First Steps partnerships charged under state law with meeting local school readiness needs.	Children across the state will not receive necessary direct or indirect supports to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.	No Change	
Oversight and technical assistance to ensure compliant, high-quality service delivery in 200+ non-public school preschool settings.	Non-public school settings serving age and income eligible four-year-olds.	Child care providers in non-public school settings	Families (adult family members and siblings)	First Steps 4K	First Steps administers publicly-funded full-day, four-year-old kindergarten within a network of non-public school preschool providers. On a rolling basis, providers are approved and students enroll.	Children across the state will not receive necessary direct supports to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.	No Change	
Provision of tuition and transportation payment for age-, income- and geographically-eligible children and their families.	Eligible children must be four years of age by September 1, reside in South Carolina, and qualify for free- or reduced-price school lunches or Medicaid.	Age and income eligible four-year-olds	Families (adult family members and siblings); child care providers in non-public school settings	First Steps 4K	First Steps administers publicly-funded full-day, four-year-old kindergarten within a network of non-public school preschool providers. On a rolling basis, providers are approved and students enroll.	Children across the state will not receive necessary direct supports to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.	No Change	
Development and maintenance of First Five SC, an online eligibility screener and common application for families to access publicly-funded early childhood services statewide	Approximately 341,000+ children under age 6	Children under age 6	Families (adult family members and siblings); child care providers; other local early childhood partners and service providers	Early Childhood Advisory Council	South Carolina's Early Childhood Advisory Council is a collaborative body representing the state's early childhood system. Established in law, the ECAC includes the directors of eight state agencies and government entities that provide state- and federally-funded services to young children. South Carolina First Steps coordinates the activities of the council.	Children across the state will not receive necessary direct supports to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.	No Change	

2024

Partnerships Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:
H620 - SC First Steps to School Readiness

Type of Partner Entity	Name of Partner Entity	Description of Partnership	Change to the partnership during the past fiscal year
State Government	SC Department of Social Services	DSS is a valued partner in the areas of child care and child welfare. Agency Director Michael Leach sits on the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.	No Change
State Government	SC Department of Education	As a co-administrator of the state's four-old-kindergarten program and the representative of public school districts statewide, the SC Department of education is a valued partner. Matthew Ferguson represents State Superintendent Ellen Weaver as a member of the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.	No Change
State Government	SC Department of Health and Environmental Control	DHEC is a valued partner in the area of maternal-child health. Agency Director Edward Simmer sits on the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.	No Change
State Government	SC Department of Health and Human Services	As the state's Medicaid agency, DHHS is a valued partner. Agency Director Robert Kerr sits on the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.	No Change
Federal Government	Head Start Collaboration Office	As the federal government's liaison between Head Start and local grantees, the Head Start Collaboration Office is a valued partner. SC Collaboration Director Mary Lynne Diggs sits on the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.	No Change
State Government	The Children's Trust of SC	As the state's Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting grantee and an active partner in the prevention of child abuse and neglect, The Children's Trust of SC is a valued agency partner. Agency Director Sue Williams sits on the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.	No Change
State Government	Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN)	DDSN is a valued partner and service provider within the interagency BabyNet system. Agency Director Constance Holloway sits on the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.	Amend
State Government	Department of Mental Health	DMH is a critical partner and provider of mental health services for young children and their families. Acting Agency Director Robert Bank sits on the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.	Add
State Government	Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs	Current home of the First Steps Data Collection System; partner in development of Early Childhood Integrated Data System	No Change
Non-Governmental Organization	Local First Steps Partnerships	First Steps' local partnership grantees deliver needed early childhood education services in each of the state's 46 counties. Two First Steps Local Partnership Executive Directors serve on the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council.	Amend
Private Business Organization	Private 4K Service Providers	Non-public school settings partner with SC First Steps to ensure the delivery of high-quality four-year-old kindergarten statewide.	No Change
Non-Governmental Organization	Alliance for Early Success	Funding to First Steps	No Change

Type of Partner Entity	Name of Partner Entity	Description of Partnership	Change to the partnership during the past fiscal year
Non-Government Organization	Aspen Institute	Providing technical assistance to First Steps	No Change
Non-Government Organization	Chapin Hall	Providing technical assistance to First Steps	No Change
Non-Government Organization	Child Trends	Providing technical assistance to the Early Childhood Advisory Council and comissioned to complete legislatively-mandated evaluations of First Steps local partnerships	Amend
Non-Governmental Organization	Doris Duke Charitable Foundation	Funding direct service via First Steps local partnerships	No Change
Non-Governmental Organization	The Duke Endowment	Funding direct service via First Steps local partnerships	No Change
Non-Governmental Organization	Fund for Shared Insight	Providing technical assistance to First Steps	Amend
Non-Government Organization	Hunt Institute	Providing technical assistance on early childhood policy development	No Change
Non-Government Organization	True North Group	Providing technical assistance to First Steps	No Change
Non-Governmental Organization	United Way Association of South Carolina	As the state's administrative agent for South Carolina's AmeriCorps program, the United Way Association of SC is a valued partner for the success of our AmeriCorps program.	No Change
Non-Government Organization	Pritzker Children's Initiative	Funder of First 5 for All technical assistance consultancy	Add
Non-Government Organization	The David and Lucile Packard Foundation	Funder of First 5 for All technical assistance consultancy	Add

2024

Reports Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:
H620 - SC First Steps to School Readiness

Report Name	Law Number (if applicable)	Summary of information requested in the report	Date of most recent submission DURING the past fiscal year	Reporting Frequency	Type of entity/entities	Method to access the report	Direct access hyperlink or agency contact (if not provided to LSA for posting online)	Changes to this report during the past fiscal year	Explanation why a report wasn't submitted
4K Underserved Communities	Proviso 1.48: FY 23-24 State Budget	Process, expenditures and expanded enrollment for needs grants.	March 2024	Annually	Legislative entity or entities	Provided to LSA for posting online	https://www.scstatehouse.gov/reports/FirstSteps/First%20Steps%204K%20Report%20Pursuant%20to%20Proviso%201.48.pdf	Amend	Column D needs to be revised, "4K Supplemental Needs Based Grants"
Agency Accountability Report	§1-1-810, 59-152- 20	The report "must contain the agency's or department's mission, objectives to accomplish the mission, and performance measures that show the degree to which objectives are being met." Agencies must "identify key program area descriptions and expenditures and link these to key financial and performance results measures."	September 2023	Annually	Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities	Provided to LSA for posting online	https://www.scstatehouse.gov/reports/aar2023/H620.pdf	No Change	
Annual Report	§59-152-50	Report on the agency's activities, strategic plan, progress on initiatives, financial information, as well as a number of other items for the most recent year.	December 2023	Annually	Legislative entity or entities	Provided to LSA for posting online	https://www.scstatehouse.gov/reports/FirstSteps/South%20Carolina%20First%20Steps%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf	No Change	
Audited Financial Statement for the year ending June 30, 2022.	§11-7-20	Audited financial statement.	October 2023	Annually	Legislative entity or entities	Available on another website	https://osa.sc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/H63-First-Steps.pdf	No Change	
CDEPP Student Information and Reporting	Proviso 1A.44: FY 23-24 State Budget	Report required to inform about students SUNS numbers for each student on the 45th day.	November 2023	Annually	Legislative entity or entities	Provided to LSA for posting online	https://www.scstatehouse.gov/reports/FirstSteps/First%20Steps%204K%20SUNS%20Numbers%20Report%20Pursuant%20to%20Proviso%201A.50.pdf	No Change	
Education Improvement Act (EIA)	Proviso 1A.29: FY 23-24 State Budget	EIA Program Report activities and expenditures	September 2023	Annually	Legislative entity or entities AND South Carolina state agency or agencies	Available on another website	coc.sc.gov	No Change	

Report Name	Law Number (if applicable)	Summary of information requested in the report	Date of most recent submission DURING the past fiscal year	Reporting Frequency	Type of entity/entities	Method to access the report	Direct access hyperlink or agency contact (if not provided to LSA for posting online)	Changes to this report during the past fiscal year	Explanation why a report wasn't submitted
Education Oversight Committee Review of 4K	Proviso 1.48 and 1A.26: FY 23-24 State Budget	Annual statutory review of the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP)	March 2024	Annually	Legislative entity or entities AND South Carolina state agency or agencies	Available on another website	https://coc.sc.gov/sites/coc/files/Documents/CERDEP%202024_Final_3_25_24.pdf	No Change	
Education Oversight Committee Review of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	Proviso 1.48 and 1A.26: FY 23-24 State Budget	Annual statutory review of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	March 2024	Annually	Legislative entity or entities AND South Carolina state agency or agencies	Available on another website	https://coc.sc.gov/sites/coc/files/Documents/CERDEP%202024_Final_3_25_24.pdf	No Change	
IT Data Collection Plan	§1-11-10	Summary of the agencies IT Needs and Plans for the next year.	July 2023	Annually	Legislative entity or entities AND South Carolina state agency or agencies	Hard copy available upon request.		No Change	
4K Extended Day, Professional Development, Impact on Parents	Proviso 1.48 & Proviso 1A.26: FY 23-24 State Budget	Expenditures for Extended Day, Quality Improvement and Professional Development, and Impact on Parents	September-24	Annually	Legislative entity or entities	Provided to LSA for posting online	First Steps 4K Quality and Professional Development Report Pursuant to Proviso 1.48.pdf (scstatehouse.gov)	No Change	
4K Funding Above the Minimum Reimbursement Rate	Proviso 1.48 and 1A.26: FY 23-24 State Budget	Funding above the minimum reimbursement rate made to any 4K provider	June 2024	Quarterly	Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities	Provided to LSA for posting online	https://www.scstatehouse.gov/reports/FirstSteps/First%20Steps%204K%20Quarterly%20Report%20Pursuant%20to%20Proviso%201.48%20Q4.pdf	No Change	
READY: State's Investment in Early Learning and Development	Proviso 1.88: FY 23-24 State Budget	Annual report on the state's investment in early learning and development	December 2023	Annually	Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities	Provided to LSA for posting online	https://www.scstatehouse.gov/reports/FirstSteps/South%20Carolina%20First%20Steps%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf	No Change	
SDE: First Steps Transfer Plan	Proviso 1.97: FY 23-24 State Budget	Plan to operate independently from the Department of Education	December 2023	Other	Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities	Electronic copy available upon request		Add	

AGENCY NAME:	First Steps to School Readiness		
AGENCY CODE:	H620	SECTION:	1

**2024
Accountability Report**

SUBMISSION FORM

I have reviewed and approved the data submitted by the agency in the following templates:

- Data Template
 - Reorganization and Compliance
 - FY2024 Strategic Plan Results
 - FY2025 Strategic Plan Development
 - Legal
 - Services
 - Partnerships
 - Report or Review
 - Budget
- Discussion Template
- Organizational Template

I have reviewed and approved the financial report summarizing the agency’s budget and actual expenditures, as entered by the agency into the South Carolina Enterprise Information System.

The information submitted is complete and accurate to the extent of my knowledge.

AGENCY DIRECTOR <i>(SIGN AND DATE):</i> (TYPE/PRINT NAME):	SIGNATURE ON FILE	Signature Received: 09/10/2024
	Mark Barnes, Interim Executive Director	

BOARD/CMSN CHAIR <i>(SIGN AND DATE):</i> (TYPE/PRINT NAME):	SIGNATURE ON FILE	Signature Received: 09/11/2024
	Dave Morley, Board Chair	