



Meeting of the Board of Trustees

February 15, 2024 at 2:00 PM

SC First Steps, 636 Rosewood Drive Columbia, SC 29201

AGENDA

- I. **Roll Call** (Avian Jones)
- II. **Public Comment Period**
The public is invited to provide comments relevant to the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council and/or South Carolina First Steps during this period. Members of the public wishing to speak must sign up before the meeting. Comments should be limited to no more than three minutes per speaker.
- III. **Call to Order and Approve Agenda** (Dr. Amy Williams)
Motion: To adopt the agenda as submitted
Motion: To adopt the December 6, 2023 minutes as submitted
Attachments: SC First Steps Board of Trustees December 6, 2023 Minutes
- IV. **Executive Committee** (Dr. Amy Williams)
Attachments: Executive Committee Report, Executive Committee Minutes
- V. **Consent Agenda:** Motions Recommended by Committees (Dr. Amy Williams)
 - a. **Motion:** To approve the changes to Program Guidelines for the four program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education, School Transitions and Health to be implemented in the 2025 grant year. (Local Partnership Programs and Grants Committee recommends)
 - b. **Motion:** To approve the recommendation for two new programs in the areas of Early Care and Education (LENA Grow) and School Transitions (Other School Transition Programming) and the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation in grant year 2025. (Local Partnership Programs and Grants Committee recommends)
 - c. **Motion:** To approve the recommendation of splitting evidence based programs listed above* in the program areas of Parenting and Early Care and Education into new evidenced based programs and to approve the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation in grant year 2025. (Local Partnership Programs and Grants Committee recommends) * Nurturing Parenting, Triple P, Incredible Years, Strengthening Families, Child Care Quality Enhancement, Enhanced Early Education
 - d. **Motion:** To approve the recommendation for consolidation of approved programs in the program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education and Health and to approve the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation in grant year 2025. (Local Partnership Programs and Grants Committee recommends)
 - e. **Motion:** To approve the recommendation for removal of approved programs in the program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education, School Transitions, and Health recommended by SC First Steps Program staff, to be removed from the program



library in grant year 2025. (Local Partnership Programs and Grants Committee recommends)

- f. Motion:** To approve the formula allocation model for FY 2024-25. (Finance and Administration Committee recommends)
 - g. Motion:** To approve the waiver request from Abbeville County First Steps for exceeding the carry forward amount of state funds in FY 2022. (Finance and Administration Committee recommends)
 - h. Motion:** To approve the corrective action determination as presented for the ten local partnerships identified in the list (Aiken, Chester, Clarendon, Fairfield, Hampton, Jasper, Laurens, Marion, Marlboro, and Oconee Counties). As a result of corrective action, the local partnerships effected are not eligible to apply for competitive or targeted grants until they have satisfactorily resolved the deficiencies noted on their corrective action plan as determined by SC First Steps. (Finance and Administration Committee recommends)
 - i. Motion:** To approve that First Steps staff will evaluate the current policy established by the board to address excessive carry forward of formula funding by local partnerships and to provide recommendations. (Finance and Administration Committee recommends)
- VI. **Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee** (Jack McBride)
Attachments: Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee Report, Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee Minutes, FY25 Operational Guidelines
Motion: To approve the operational guidelines, to include core functions, as submitted, for implementation in grant year 2025, beginning July 1, 2024.
- VII. **Finance and Administration Committee** (Jesica Mackey)
Attachments: Finance and Administration Committee Report, Finance and Administration Committee Meeting Minutes, FY 2024-25 Allocation Model, Abbeville County First Steps Waiver Request, Local Partnership Financial Reports for FY 2023, FY2024 Financial Status Report as of January 31, 2024, Donations Report as of January 31, 2024.
- VIII. **Legislative Committee** (Sen. Gerald Malloy)
Attachments: Legislative Report
- IX. **Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee** (Dr. Amy Williams)
Attachments: Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Report, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Minutes, 2023 First Steps Rocks Progress Update, SC First Steps Child Care Scholarships External Evaluation
- X. **Executive Director's Report** (Georgia Mjartan)
Attachments: Executive Director's Report, SC First Steps Organizational Chart
- XI. **First Steps is Here: Parents As Teachers**
Jordan Waters, Parents as Teachers Program Alumni (Laurens County First Steps), Child Care Scholarship Recipient (Laurens County First Steps), and First Steps 4K Parent
- XII. **Motion:** To adjourn the meeting of the SC First Steps Board of Trustees



Board of Trustees Meeting
December 6, 2023 2:00PM
SC First Steps
636 Rosewood Drive Columbia, SC 29201
Minutes

Trustees Present (14):

Jacque Curtin
Mary Lynne Diggs
John Hayes
Sen. Greg Hembree
Constance Holloway
Robert Kerr
Michael Leach
Dave Morley, Chairman
Janie Neeley

Roger Pryor
Mary Anne Scott
Dr. Edward Simmer
Wes Wooten
Sue Williams

Trustees Absent (9)

Rep. Terry Alexander
Dr. Robert Bank
Rep. Shannon Erickson
Matthew Ferguson
Jessica Mackey
Sen. Gerald Malloy
Jack McBride
Dr. Amy Williams
Dr. Brenda Williams

Attendees (69)

Georgia Mjartan
Avian Jones
Aleigha Butler
Amanda Bailey
Amy Engle
Brandie Maness
Bresheca Funches
Carletta Isreal
Chastine Dickey-Jackson
Cheryl Scales
Cindy Ellis
Cindy Galloway
Donna Mason
Dwana Doctor
Felicia Battle
Felicia Davis
Gina Beebe
Grace Avin
Jabari Clyburn
Jennifer Williams
Jessica Moore
Jon Artz
Julie Greer
Kathy Fitzgerald
Kathy Miller
Kelly Cochran

Kenya Johnson
Kristen Martocchio
Kristin Zeaser-Sydow
Laura Baker
Leah Crosby
Lee Patterson
Lexi Jones
Linnie Miller
Lis Guimaraes
Meredith Dickens
Parry Wright Little
Pauletta Plowden
Rebecca Clark
Roddrick Dugger
Ryan Shinn
Samantha Ingram
Sarah Crawford
SheKiah Reese
Silvia Landrum
Stacy Greenwalt
Tiffany Outlaw
Tyshica McConner
Beth Moore
Chelsea Richard
Kaitlyn Richards
Mark Barnes

Derek Cromwell
Martha Strickland
Meghan Dyson
Kristine Jenkins
Kerry Cordan
Kenna Hoover
Kim Trudell
Joy Mazur
Dorian Young
Shayla Pettigrew
David Lisk
Dorothy Priester
Elizabeth Dudek
Shelley Canright
Myrelo King
Tomeiko Wright
Jovanna Lewis



The meeting began with a presentation of the recipients of 4K Expansion Grant awards, presented by Ms. Strickland. Mr. Morley called the meeting to order at 2:12 p.m. He requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Ms. Curtin provided the motion, seconded by Mr. Hayes, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the October 19, 2023 minutes. Dr. Simmer provided the motion, seconded by Ms. Neeley, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley shared that the Executive Committee did not meet due to how closely they were scheduled to the December meeting. He asked for a motion to approve the 2024 SC First Steps Board of Trustees and Early Childhood Advisory Council meeting dates. Ms. Curtin provided the motion, seconded by Ms. Scott, and the motion was unanimously approved.

A public official ethics training was provided to the board by Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director of the South Carolina State Ethics Commission.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the following consent agenda with the amendments. Sen. Hembree provided the motion. Dr. Simmer provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Consent Agenda: Motions Recommended by Committees (Dave Morley)

- a. **Motion:** To approve the award of Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation grants to ~~four (4)~~ three (3) Local Partnerships as selected by the SCFS State Office external review Committee, Lee County, Pickens County, ~~Richland County~~, and York County (Local Partnership Programs and Grants Committee recommends)

Dr. Richard reported on the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee where she provided updates on First Steps 4K ESSER funded pilots for teacher recruitment and retention stipends, and for language and literacy boost.

Mr. Wooten reported on the Local Partnership Programs and Grants Committee. He shared that out of ten counties that were invited to apply for the Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation grant, four submitted applications, and three counties (Lee, Pickens, York) were awarded grants.

Mr. Barnes reported on the Finance and Administration Committee. The agency is in good financial condition with a budget that exceeds \$79 million. He shared that one SLED investigation is closed without any findings while the other investigation remains ongoing. He provided an update on the PEBA benefits process for the local partnerships. He also provided an update on the investigation regarding fraudulent ACH forms that were tied to a specific 4K provider in the amount of \$15,000 and the steps that have been put in place to protect the 4K accounts.

Sen. Hembree provided a legislative update.

Ms. Mjartan and Ms. Tomeiko Wright, Lancaster County First Steps Executive Director, recognized LaTonya Boyd, Chester County First Steps Executive Director, who passed away unexpectedly. Ms.



Mjartan welcomed local partnerships executive directors Tomeiko Wright and Jovanna Lewis, Calhoun County First Steps.

Mr. Morley acknowledged trustees who have left the board this year. The trustees were Nicole Wynkoop effective January 31, 2023, Jennifer McConnell effective February 21, 2023, Alexia Newman effective June 14, 2023, Tim Holt effective June 21, 2023, and Dr. Shelley Canright effective August 9, 2023.

Ms. Mjartan gave the Executive Director's report where she provided data on First Steps 4K Day 45, Countdown to Kindergarten, and fundraising progress. Director Mjartan shared information about MLK Week of Service. Ms. Mjartan gave an update on Act 81 Implementation and the First Steps Transfer Plan. She introduced new staff members, shared staffing changes, and the agency's current vacancies. Ms. Mjartan provided an overview of the 2022-2023 Annual Report. Ms. Mjartan, Mr. Leach, and Dr. Simmer announced a partnership between SC First Steps, DSS, and DHEC, to bridge the gap in funding to continue the Healthy Steps evidence-based program for an additional two years after federal grant funds end in 2024.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Sue Williams provided the motion. Sen. Hembree seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m. by Mr. Morley.



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees

From: David Morley, Chairman, Executive Committee

Date: January 2024

RE: Executive Committee Report

Acknowledgment of guest speakers at today's meeting:

- Jordan Waters, Parents as Teachers Program Alumni (Laurens County First Steps), Child Care Scholarship Recipient (Laurens County First Steps), and First Steps 4K Parent
- Katherine Meadows, Laurens County First Steps Parent Educator

The Executive Committee of the Board of South Carolina First Steps met on January 19, 2024. The committee discussed and approved the Local Partnership Executive Director hiring and salary recommendations from Spartanburg County First Steps and the Local Partnership Executive Director salary recommendation from McCormick County First Steps. These actions were taken on behalf of the full board due to their time sensitivity. Minutes from the meeting are attached.

On February 9, 2024, Chairman Dave Morley appointed Dr. Amy Williams to serve as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps and the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Dr. Shelley Canright previously served in the role of Vice Chair.



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes January 19, 2024

The Executive Committee of the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees met on January 19, 2024. The meeting was called to order at 11:06 am by Chairman Dave Morley. The following members were present, constituting a quorum: Dave Morley, Jesica Mackey, and Wes Wooten. Sen. Gerald Malloy and Dr. Amy Williams were not present. Executive Director Georgia Mjartan was present.

Pursuit to the requirements of Act 81 regarding local partnership executive director hiring, compensation, and evaluation, Mjartan provided the committee with information and requested action be taken on time-sensitive, local partnership personnel matters. So that the information could be discussed confidentially, Jesica Mackey motioned and Wes Wooten seconded the following motion which was adopted unanimously:

Motion to enter executive session for the purpose of personnel matters: to discuss local partnership board recommendations to hire and establish the salary of an executive director for Spartanburg County First Steps; to discuss local partnership board recommendation regarding McCormick County First Steps executive director compensation; and to present local partnership board's annual evaluation of Anderson County First Steps executive director.

Wes Wooten **motioned** and Jesica Mackey seconded to exit executive session. All voted in favor, having taken no action in executive session.

Once the members exited executive session, they took action on behalf of the board of trustees:

Jesica Mackey motioned and Wes Wooten seconded the following motion which was adopted unanimously:

Motion to approve the proposed Spartanburg County First Steps executive director candidate and salary, as submitted by the local partnership board, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter.

Jesica Mackey motioned and Wes Wooten seconded the following motion which was adopted unanimously:

Motion to approve the proposed McCormick County First Steps executive director compensation, as submitted by the local partnership board, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter.

Georgia Mjartan provided a legislative update on budget request and legislation the agency is watching or is involved in including a bill to define and provide better supports to prevent preschool suspension and expulsion in publicly funded PreK settings. Director Mjartan outlined plans for a reorganization and compensation and classification changes based on a recently completed study by the Office of HR at the SC Department of Administration. This will be implemented on February 2, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees

From: Wes Wooten

Date: February 7, 2024

RE: Local Partnerships Program and Grants Committee

The Local Partnerships Program and Grants Committee met on Thursday, January 18, 2024. Minutes of the meeting are attached. Motions 1-5 were approved unanimously.

1. Action Item - Program Guidelines updated for grant year 2025.

Gina Beebe, Parenting Program Manager, Kate Roach, Early Care and Education Program Manager, Janice Kilburn, School Transition Coordinator, and Kerry Cordan, Health Program Manager provided updates to the committee on the changes to guidelines in their respective areas recommended for grant year 25. (See attached minutes)

Motion

The Local Partnership Program and Grants committee approves the changes to Program Guidelines for the four program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education, School Transitions and Health to be implemented in the 2025 grant year. The motion was brought by Roger Pryor, seconded by Wes Wooten, and unanimously approved for consent agenda.

2. Action Item- New Programs and associated guidelines for grant year 2025.

Kerry Cordan, Health Program Manager, and Janice Kilburn, School Transitions Coordinator described the new programs and their associated guidelines for consideration.

• **Early Care and Education**

Lena Grow (see attached guidelines)- is the LENA literacy program packaged for delivery in early care programs. Teachers are provided training and support for increasing conversation with the young children in their care. At participating centers, children wear the LENA device to record conversations and those recordings are used to provide feedback to teachers about early language practices in the classroom. And associated program guidelines

• **School Transitions**

Other School Transition Programs (see attached guidelines)- is 4K or 5K school transition programming designed to support children and families as the target child transitions to school. They can look different for each partnership, based on family, school, and community needs. Partnerships will develop an implementation plan to be submitted for approval by SCFS.

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee approves the recommendation for two new programs in the areas Early Care and Education (LENA Grow) and School Transitions (Other School Transition Programming) and approves the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation



in grant year 2025. The motion was brought by Jack McBride, seconded by Roger Pryor, and unanimously approved for consent agenda.

3. Action Item - Approved Programs recommended for split.

Gina Beebe, Parenting Program Manager, Kate Roach, Early Care and Education Program Manager discuss the recommended split of programs within their respective areas. Each new program will be based depending upon the curriculum that is used for each program or the age of participants for the Parenting programs and differentiate between provider or whole center intervention for the Early Care and Education programs. (See attached minutes)

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee approves the recommendation of splitting the evidenced based programs listed above in the program areas of Parenting (10), and Early Care and Education (5), into new evidenced based programs and approves the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation in grant year 2025. The motion was brought by Roger Pryor, seconded by Jack McBride, and unanimously approved for consent agenda.

4. Action Item- Approved Programs recommended for consolidation.

Gina Beebe, Parenting Program Manager, Kate Roach, Early Care and Education Program Manager, Janice Kilburn, School Transition Coordinator, and Kerry Cordan, Health Program Manager explain the recommendations for consolidation of program within their respective program areas. (See attached minutes)

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee approves the recommendation for consolidation of approved programs in the program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education and Health and approves the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation in grant year 2025. The motion was brought by Roger Pryor, seconded by Jack McBride, and unanimously approved for consent agenda.

5. Action Item- Approved programs recommended for removal.

Gina Beebe, Parenting Program Manager, Kate Roach, Early Care and Education Program Manager, Janice Kilburn, School Transition Coordinator, and Kerry Cordan, Health Program Manager provided insight and explanation for programs being recommended for removal for the First Steps program catalog for grant year 25. (See attachment)

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee approves the recommendation for removal of approved programs in the program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education, School Transitions, and Health recommended by SC First Steps Program staff, to be removed from program library in grant year 2025. The motion was brought by Jack McBride, seconded by Roger Pryor, and unanimously approved for consent agenda.

6. Action Required by Full Board- Operational Guidelines to include Core Functions



This action was present by Jon Artz who went over the changes to the operations guidelines for grant year 25. Jon explained that many changes were made to bring the guidelines current with the changes required by the passing of Act 81 that was signed by the Governor on June 19th, 2023.

Because of the many changes and updates, committee member Roger Pryor recommended that the operational guideline updates should be considered by the full Board of Trustees and not be a part of the consent agenda. The committee deferred to Roger's experience on the committee and agreed to request full board approval.

Motion: To approve the operational guidelines, to include core functions, as submitted, for implementation in grant year 2025, beginning July 1, 2024.



Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2024, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Virtual

Committee Members in Attendance: Roger Pryor, Wes Wooten, Jack McBride

SCFS Staff in Attendance: Derek Cromwell, Georgia Mjartan, Chelsea Richard, Gina Beebe, Janice Kilburn, Cheryl Scales-Chavis, Kerry Cordan, LaMyra Sanders Dukes, Kate Roach, Jon Artz, Carletta Isreal, Kathy Fitzgerald, Kenya Johnson, Lis Guimaraes, Delores Rock, LaMyra Dukes, Beth Kienzlen, Kenya Johnson, and Andy Jensen

Open – Chairman Wes Wooten called the meeting to order at 1:08 pm without a quorum and turned the floor over to Derek Cromwell to introduce the agenda. Derek stated he will start going through the agenda, read through the action items as we got to them, but not take any votes or motions until we receive quorum. The floor was then turned over to Gina Beebe, Kate Roach, Kerry Cordan and Janice Kilburn who gave an overview of the first action item for their program areas. At 1:24 we reached quorum and could now have votes on all action items.

1. **Action Item:** Program Guidelines updated for grant year 2025.

Gina Beebe, Parenting Program Manager, Kate Roach, Early Care and Education Program Manager, Janice Kilburn, School Transition Coordinator, and Kerry Cordan, Health Program Manager provided updates to the committee on the changes to guidelines in their respective areas recommended for grant year 25.

- Parenting Programs- Refer to pages 11-13 in Program Guidelines (see attached).
- Early Care and Education- Refer to page 131- 132 in Program Guidelines (see attached)
- School Transition- Refer to page 172 in Program Guidelines (see attached)
- Health- Refer to page 181 in Program Guidelines (see attached)

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants committee approves the changes to Program Guidelines for the four program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education, School Transitions and Health to be implemented in the 2025 grant year.

Motion was read by Derek Cromwell,

Called to motion: by Roger Pryor

Seconded: by Wes Wooten

Vote: All said Yes

2. **Action Item:** New Programs and associated guidelines for grant year 2025

Kerry Cordan, Health Program Manager, and Janice Kilburn, School Transitions Coordinator described the new programs and their associated guidelines for consideration.



- Early Care and Education
 - Lena Grow (see attached guidelines)- is the LENA literacy program packaged for delivery in early care programs. Teachers are provided training and support for increasing conversation with the young children in their care. At participating centers, children wear the LENA device to record conversations and those recordings are used to provide feedback to teachers about early language practices in the classroom.
- School Transitions
 - Other School Transition Programs (see attached guidelines)- is 4K or 5K school transition programming designed to support children and families as the target child transitions to school. They can look different for each partnership, based on family, school, and community needs. Partnerships will develop an implementation plan to be submitted for approval by SCFS.
- Program Guidelines associated with the new program recommendation. (See attached)

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee approves the recommendation for two new programs in the areas Early Care and Education (LENA Grow) and School Transitions (Other School Transition Programming) and approves the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation in grant year 2025.

Motion was read by Derek Cromwell,

Called to motion: by Jack McBride

Seconded: by Roger Pryor

Vote: All said Yes

3. Action Item: Approved Programs recommended for split.

Gina Beebe, Parenting Program Manager, Kate Roach, Early Care and Education Program Manager discuss the recommended split of programs within their respective areas. Each new program will be based depending upon the curriculum that is used for each program or the age of participants for the Parenting programs and differentiate between provider or whole center intervention for the Early Care and Education programs.

- Parenting Programs
 - Nurturing Parenting- Recommendation to split Nurturing Parenting (program code 223) into more discrete units based on the curriculum utilized and the target population for the intervention: Split into 4 programs:
 - Nurturing Skills for Families
 - Parents And Their Infants, Toddlers, And Preschoolers- DSS Referrals



- Parents And Their Infants, Toddlers, And Preschoolers- Comprehensive
 - Nurturing Father
- Triple P- Recommendation to split Triple P into three discrete programs for levels 2, 3, and 4. Triple P level 1, which is about community wide education, will be considered a core function activity.
 - Triple P Level 2
 - Triple P Level 3
 - Triple P Level 4
- Incredible Years- Recommendation to split Incredible Years (program code 215) into more discrete units based on the curriculum utilized and the target population for the intervention.
 - Incredible Years - Parents and Babies (<1 year)
 - Incredible Years - Toddler (1-<3 years)
 - Incredible Years – Preschooler (3-<7 years)
- Early Care and Education
 - Child Care Quality Enhancement/Quality Counts- Recommendation to split program code 601 into two programs to clarify the focus of the intervention, whether it is a focus classroom (Quality Enhancement) or the entire childcare provider (Quality Counts). Recommendation to also rename the new programs to better describe what they entail:
 - Child Care Technical Assistance and Coaching- Classroom focused (Formerly Child Care Quality Enhancement)
 - Quality Counts- Whole Center Focused
 - Enhanced Early Education- Recommendation to split program code 320 into three separate programs to be more reflective of what is being implemented and so what is being implemented can be replicated elsewhere:
 - Enhanced Early Education- On-Site Tutoring
 - Enhanced Early Education- Parent Workshops
 - Enhanced Early Education- Enrichment Activities
- Program guidelines for newly created Evidenced Based Programs.(see attached)

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee approves the recommendation of splitting the evidenced based programs listed above in the program areas of Parenting (10), and Early Care and Education (5), into new evidenced based programs and approves the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation in grant year 2025.

Motion was read an amended ((10) changed to (12)) By Derek Cromwell.

Called to motion: by Roger Pryor

Seconded: by Jack McBride



Vote: All said Yes

4. Action Item: Approved Programs recommended for consolidation.

Gina Beebe, Parenting Program Manager, Kate Roach, Early Care and Education Program Manager, Janice Kilburn, School Transition Coordinator, and Kerry Cordan, Health Program Manager explain the recommendations for consolidation of program within their respective program areas.

- Parenting Programs- Consolidate program codes 204 (Other Family Literacy/Learning) and 209 (Library Based Program) into program code 209 called "Library Based and Other Learning Programs".
 - Library Based and Other Learning Programs (209)- As part of this program partnerships would be required to submit an implementation plan as part of the formula funding grant application to utilize this code.
- Early Care and Education- Recommendation to consolidate program codes 318 (Early Ed for Children Under 4), 314 (Full Day 4-K/Extended Day), and 316 (Half Day/Part-time 4-K) into two programs to be more reflective of what is being implemented and so what is being implemented can be replicated elsewhere. For each of these new programs, partnerships would be required to submit documentation prior to implementation.
 - Early Education Program Operation
 - Early Education Program Support
- Health Programs- Recommend consolidating program codes 907 and 901 into one code (901). Partnerships would be required to submit an implementation plan as part of the formula funding grant application to utilize this code.
 - Health Services Coordination and Other Health Programming (901)
- Program Guidelines for newly consolidated programs. (See attached)

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee approves the recommendation for consolidation of approved programs in the program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education and Health and approves the recommended program guidelines associated with these programs for implementation in grant year 2025.

Motion was read by Derek Cromwell,

Called to motion: by Roger Pryor

Seconded: by Jack McBride

Vote: All said Yes

5. Action Item: Approved programs recommended for removal.

Gina Beebe, Parenting Program Manager, Kate Roach, Early Care and Education Program Manager, Janice Kilburn, School Transition Coordinator, and Kerry Cordan, Health Program



Manager provided insight and explanation for programs being recommended for removal for the First Steps program catalog for grant year 25.

Motion: The Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee approves the recommendation for removal of approved programs in the program areas of Parenting, Early Care and Education, School Transitions, and Health recommended by SC First Steps Program staff, to be removed from program library in grant year 2025.

Motion was read and amended(Added School Transitions) by Derek Cromwell,

Called to motion: by Jack McBride

Seconded: by Roger Pryor

Vote: All said Yes

6. Action Item: Operational Guidelines to include Core Functions (see attached)

This action was present by Jon Artz who went over the changes to the operations guidelines for grant year 25. Jon explained that many changes were made to bring the guidelines current with the changes required by the passing of Act 81 that was signed by the Governor on June 19th, 2023.

Because of the many changes and updates, committee member Roger Pryor recommended that the operational guideline updates should be considered by the full Board of Trustees and not be a part of the consent agenda. The committee deferred to Roger's experience on the committee and agreed. No motion for the approval of operational guidelines was made and will be presented to the full Board.

7. Meeting was called to adjourn by Wes Wooten at 3:03pm, seconded by Jack McBride and all voted yes.

Next meeting is March 21, 2024 @ 1:00pm

FY25 Operational Guidelines Summary of Changes-

*all changes shown as track changes in the attached document

1. Clarify location of wording in legislation by adding accurate section labels.
2. Addition of on-site monitoring requirement (page 2)
3. Change in formula funding grant application timeline and process (page 2)
4. Change in requirement for program registration and projected to serve to be entered in the First Steps Data System (page 3)
5. Clarification of data entry requirements (page 3)
6. Addition of requirements for executive director hiring, salary increases, and annual evaluations (page 5)
7. Addition of language outlining process for forming multi-county partnerships (page 6)
8. Clarification of local partnership board meeting requirements (page 6)
9. Change in local partnership board officers and clarification of membership term limits (page 6)
10. Addition of expectation for using funding for goals and purposes of First Steps (page 7)
11. Addition of expectation to adhere to procurement guidelines established by SCFS Board of Trustees (page 8)
12. Addition of core functions data expectations (page 9)
13. Reorganization of core functions expectations (page 9)
14. Reorganization of core functions section to combine community convener and mobilizing local communities activities (pages 10-11)

This document outlines the guidelines for local First Steps Partnerships with regard to programmatic, operational, financial, and administrative activities of the partnership. This document will be attached to the 2022-2023 grant agreement between local partnerships and South Carolina First Steps as a condition for receiving an annual funding allocation from the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees. It is the responsibility of the local partnership board and staff to comply with all program and operational guidelines (~~Section 19~~-Section 59-152-160(A)).

Operational Guidelines

Operational guidelines are organized into the following sub-sections:

- Operations and Governance
- Fiscal Accountability
- Core Functions
- Resource Development

Additionally, operational guidelines reference the partnership's annual grant agreement with SC First Steps, the SC First Steps [Finance and Administration](#) Operations Manual, First Steps legislation, local partnership by-laws and other important documents. It is the responsibility of the local partnership board and staff to be familiar with and comply with the terms and conditions, policies and procedures contained in these documents.

Operational guidelines and supporting documents will be reviewed with board members and staff on at least an annual basis.

Program Guidelines

Program guidelines apply to all local First Steps partnerships that operate the strategy in question, regardless of funding source. All strategies, whether operated by the partnership inhouse or by one or more vendors or partners, must adhere to board-approved program guidelines. Program guidelines sub-sections include:

1. Parenting
2. Early Care and Education
3. School Transitions
4. Health

Program guidelines will be reviewed with board members and staff on at least an annual basis. Partnership staff should also review applicable guidelines with vendors on an ongoing basis as part of program monitoring.

All programs are classified (at minimum) as one of the following:

- Evidence-Based Program Strategy
- Evidence-Informed Program Strategy
- High-Intensity Program Strategy

Local Partnerships are encouraged to provide at least one Evidence-Based and High-Intensity Program Strategy.

Monitoring and Compliance

On behalf of the First Steps Board of Trustees, the State Office of First Steps will monitor local partnerships [59-152-160\(A\)](#).

~~SECTION 10~~. Section 59-1-52-50

- (2) review the local partnerships' plans and budgets in order to provide technical assistance and recommendations regarding local grant proposals and improvement in meeting statewide and local goals;
- (3) provide technical assistance, consultation, and support to local partnerships to facilitate their success including, but not limited to, model programs, strategic planning, leadership development, best practice, successful strategies, collaboration, financing, and evaluation;

~~SECTION 12.~~ Section 59-152-70

- (F) As a condition of receiving state funds, each local partnership must be subject to performance reviews by South Carolina First Steps, including, but not limited to, local board functioning and collaboration and compliance with state standards and fiscal accountability.

~~Section~~ Section 59-152-160

- (A) The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall establish internal evaluation policies and procedures for local partnerships for an annual review of the functioning of the partnership, implementation of strategies, and progress toward the interim goals and benchmarks.

~~A Local Partnership can be audited/monitored at random by the State Office of First Steps. Local partnerships will receive an on-site monitoring visit from the State Office of First Steps at least once every four years. Each year, the local partnerships to be monitored will be selected using a weighted formula. The purpose of the monitoring visits are to ensure programmatic and operational standards are being followed and provide an opportunity for coaching and relationships building.~~

Review of the Formula Funding Grant

The State Office of First Steps will provide feedback to local partnerships regarding partnership functioning and performance, including progress toward achieving the objectives within the partnership's Comprehensive Strategic Plan. This feedback occurs as part of the three-year grant cycle which includes an ~~Annual Continuation Interim~~ Progress Report (IPR) each year and a full Formula Funding Grant Application every three years. ~~(For FY25, it will be a two-year cycle, FY26 will be an IPR, and FY27 will be the first year of the three-year cycle.)~~ The first year of the grant cycle aligns with the Needs Assessment and Comprehensive Strategic Planning process required by statute every three years. ~~IPR interim Progress Reports will be used to assess progress toward achieving the objectives within the partnership's Comprehensive Strategic Plan.~~

Corrective Action Plans

Unmet minimum requirements for formula grant funding that correspond to Section 59-152-90 and Section 59-152-70 of the First Steps legislation, to include findings of non-compliance with program or operational guidelines, will become part of a state board-approved Corrective Action Plan to the Local Partnership. Unmet qualifications that are not resolved within the time-frame specified in the partnership's Corrective Action Plan may result in a future non-compliance penalty to the Local Partnership's funding amount, to be determined by the state board as specified in the Formula Funding Reduction Levels Policy (See Appendix A)



First Steps Operational Guidelines



Operations and Governance

Operations

At minimum, the Local Partnership Board and Staff shall:

1. Exercise appropriate operational stewardship by adhering to the practices and procedures outlined in the SC First Steps Legislation (~~Section 12.~~ Section 59-152-70-(6)), local partnership by-laws, local partnership grant agreement, and SC First Steps [Finance and Administration](#) Operations Manual.
2. Comply with all contractual and legislative deadlines for submitting documents to the State Office of First Steps, including but not limited to:
 - An Annual Report by October 1 (~~Section 12.~~ Section 59-152-70(A)(8));
 - An annual Formula Funding Grant Application by the published deadline (~~Section 13.~~ Section 59-152-90(B)),
 - A Needs and Resources Assessment every three years (~~Section 12.~~ Section 59-152-70(A)(5));
 - And A three-year Comprehensive [Strategic](#) Plan (~~Section 12.~~ Section 59-152-70(A)(2)).
3. Participate and cooperate fully in all internal and independent evaluations of the First Steps initiative (~~Section 19.~~ Section 59-125-160(A-C)).
4. ~~Data shall be collected and entered timely in the First Steps Data Collection System for all programs/strategies, according to the First Steps operational guidelines for that strategy.~~ Partnerships must complete program and vendor registration for all funded strategies [identified through the formula grant application process and enter projected to serve numbers for each strategy no later than July 15 of the program year. For programs approved through the targeted and competitive grant process, program and vendor registration must be completed within 10 business days from the date of the signed grant amendment agreement.](#) ~~enter projected to serve numbers for each strategy, and begin data entry by September 1 of each program year. Partnership and vendor staff are expected to adhere to the standard for timely data submission, based on the date of service, within 5 days for case level data (enrollment, home visits, group connections, assessments, etc.) and 30 days for programs that utilize the outputs data reporting (childcare training, DPIL, NFP, etc.).~~
5. ~~Data shall be collected and entered timely in the First Steps Data Collection System for all programs/strategies, according to the First Steps program and operational guidelines for that strategy. Partnership and vendor staff are expected to adhere to the standard for timely data submission, based on the date of service, within 5 days for case level data (enrollment, home visits, group connections, assessments, etc.) and 30 days for programs that utilize the outputs data reporting (childcare training, DPIL, NFP, etc.).~~ ~~Data shall be collected and entered timely in the First Steps Data Collection System (FSDC) for all programs/strategies, according to the First Steps operational guidelines for that strategy. Partnerships must complete program and vendor registration for all funded strategies, enter projected to serve numbers for each strategy, and begin data entry by September 1 of each program year. Partnership and vendor staff are expected to adhere to the standard for timely data submission, based on the date of service, within 5 days for case level data (enrollment, home visits, group connections, assessments, etc.) and 30 days for programs that utilize the outputs data reporting (childcare training, DPIL, NFP, etc.).~~
- 5.6. In order for services to be provided, where case-level data is input into FSDC, consent must be obtained using the required consent form in Appendix B. If an individual refuses to sign the consent form, then services cannot be provided. The consent form contains the minimum, required information to create a case in FSDC. Cases must be marked as consented in FSDC, along with the date that consent was obtained. Signed consent forms must be kept on file at the local partnership.
 - a. Sometimes, additional program-specific enrollment or consent forms may be required by the program model

b. If consent is revoked by a family at any time, notify state office in writing by forwarding notification to Beth Kienzlen, Database Administrator, at bkienzlen@scfirststeps.org

c. Consent will need to be re-signed by families annually

~~6-7.~~ On the consent form identified in Appendix B, the following sections are optional for clients to agree to: Authorization for Data Sharing; Consent to be Contacted; Media Release. Services can be provided if clients do not agree to these. Clients' agreement or disagreement to these provisions must be marked in FSDC. Signed forms must be kept on file at the local partnership. In FY24, use with all newly and currently enrolled program participants within 90 days of the fiscal year.

~~7-8.~~ SC First Steps reserves the right to view partnership and vendor data in the system at any time, including but not limited to the following data checkpoints: 10 business days after Quarter 1 (Oct. 1~~43~~); 10 business days after Quarter 2 (Jan. 1~~56~~); 10 business days after Quarter 3 (April 1~~42~~); and 10 business days after Quarter 4 (July 1~~45~~). Data will be used to evaluate overall program performance and sustainability.

~~8-9.~~ Make every effort to participate in scheduled meetings and teleconferences/webinars with SC First Steps. In the event the partnership executive director is unable to attend, a board member or staff member should attend if possible. Partnerships are responsible for the content presented.

~~• Partnerships shall adhere to the State Office Hiring Policy, as outlined in the partnership grant agreement.~~

- The local partnership board and staff shall not unlawfully discriminate against any person or category of persons for services or employment.
- The local partnership shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations regarding employee discrimination and workplace policies, as outlined in the partnership's annual grant agreement with SC First Steps.
- The local partnership board and staff shall prohibit preferential treatment and nepotism with regard to hiring, supervision, and promotion. Per the Conflict of Interest Policy, no immediate family member may work under a partnership employee's supervision or chain of command.
- The partnership shall have human resource policies adopted by the partnership board ~~that adhere to the~~ [HR Policy Template approved by the First Steps Board of Trustees.](#)
- Partnerships shall provide to all partnership employees a copy of the partnership's current human resource policies, Whistleblower Policy and the SC First Steps Conflict of Interest policy. It is recommended that these policies be reviewed with staff. It is also recommended that COI and Whistleblower policies be shared with staff of vendor-operated programs.

~~• The partnership board must approve any salary increase for the partnership director, per the partnership's grant agreement with SCFS.~~

- The partnership shall abide by the Dual Partnership Employment policy contained in the partnership's grant agreement with SCFS.

~~10.~~ Partnerships and all its employees, agents, contractors and representatives shall safeguard confidential information and comply with all Confidentiality/Safeguarding Information requirements contained in the partnership's grant agreement with SCFS. Per the partnership grant agreement, partnership employees shall sign annually the Confidentiality Form attached to the partnership grant agreement, and it is recommended that partnership board members and vendor staff also sign a Confidentiality Form annually.

~~11.~~ Local partnership boards are required to submit all executive director hiring [and compensation recommendations.](#), ~~and annual evaluations for approval by the First Steps Board of Trustees.~~ [Local Partnerships are also required to submit executive director annual evaluations for review by the First Steps Board of Trustees.](#)

- [The partnership board must approve all starting compensation and compensation increase requests related to the partnership's executive director. Once they approve the request, it must be submitted to the First Steps Board of Trustees for final approval prior to implementation according to the guidelines established by the First Steps Board of Trustees \(per SC Statutes\).](#)

Governance and Oversight

The local partnership board shall:

1. Operate in accordance with local partnership bylaws, the current First Steps legislation, and with all applicable state and federal laws pertaining to non-profit organizations and ensure the partnership board and staff meet all requirements to maintain the partnership's non-profit status with the IRS.
2. Maintain continuous Directors' and Officers' Liability, Comprehensive General Liability (including bodily injury, property damage, personal injury, and sexual abuse and molestation rider), and Workers' Compensation Employee Liability insurance with the corresponding limits of liability listed in the partnership's annual grant agreement.
3. Provide Planning and Oversight
 - Coordinate a collaborative effort at the county or multicounty level to identify area needs related to the First Steps legislative goals, and develop a strategic long-term plan (i.e., Comprehensive [Strategic Plan](#)) for meeting those needs (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(A)(2)). The partnership's Comprehensive [Strategic Plan](#) should align with the priorities identified in the state strategic plan adopted by the SC First Steps Board, as well as the state board's adopted readiness benchmarks (Profile of the Ready Kindergartner) and the First Steps legislative goals. Per Section 59-152-70, Comprehensive [Strategic Plans](#) shall include the three core functions of local partnerships (local portal, community convener, and support for state level priorities). Comprehensive [Strategic Plans](#) shall be for three years' duration, to align with legislative requirements for updating community needs and resources assessments every three years. Local partnership Comprehensive [Strategic Plans](#), as well as any annual updates, are to be posted to the SC First Steps web site by December 1 each year, per First Steps legislation (~~Section 12.~~ Section 59-152-70(A)(8)). To meet this requirement, future Comprehensive [Strategic Plans](#) will be due to SC First Steps on or before November 1 in the year in which the partnership's current plan expires.
 - Oversee program strategies in accordance with SC First Steps Partnership and Operational Guidelines, exercise due diligence when selecting program strategies and, when establishing new program strategies, commit to allowing sufficient time for successful implementation (min. 2 years recommended).
 - Local Partnerships have the option to become multicounty partnerships. If partnerships choose to form a multicounty partnership, the local partnership boards shall submit a joint proposal to the SC First Steps Board of Trustees. This proposal must include, but is not limited to, a plan to ensure each county is equally represented on the partnership board. No multicounty partnership may be established or separated without prior approval by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees. (Section 59-152-70(E))
4. Ensure effective board functioning:
 - ~~Meet as a full board at least once every fiscal quarter, with one full board meeting each year designated as the Annual Meeting. Meet at least once per quarter with quorum, with one board meeting designated as the Annual Meeting documented by meeting minutes.~~
 - Maintain all current approved policies/procedures/standards for conducting meetings and elections and disclosing records comparable to those provided for in the Freedom of Information Act and IRS disclosure requirements.
 - Maintain records of meeting announcements, sign-in sheets and minutes for all full board and committee meetings. Electronic copies of board minutes for the prior fiscal year will be submitted to SCFS, on behalf of the state board, by July 15 (~~Section 12.~~ Section 59-152-70(A)(7)).
 - Follow the Records Retention Policy/Schedule contained in their grant agreement with SCFS, as well as the retention policy for Corporate Records contained in the partnership by-laws.
 - Review, adopt, and sign an Annual Board Member Agreement that at minimum includes an annually reviewed and adopted:
 - a. Conflict of Interest Policy (must align to the policy contained in the partnership's current year grant agreement with SCFS). Prior to every vote taken by the board, members must abstain from voting if the issue being considered would result in a conflict of interest. The abstention must be noted in the minutes of the meeting (~~Section 11.~~ Section 59-152-60(G)).
 - b. Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms must be completed annually, and as undisclosed conflicts occur during the grant year, by all board and staff and kept on file at the local partnership.
 - c. Confidentiality Form (contained in annual grant agreement).

- d. Whistleblower Policy.
 - e. Attendance Policy outlining minimum board meeting attendance requirements, to include definitions of unexcused and excused absences and no more than three (3) consecutive unexcused absences, per partnership bylaws.
5. Practice Ongoing Board Development/New Member Orientation:
- Use Board Matrix/Planning Documents/Board Evaluation Tools to annually assess the composition and functioning of the board to identify gaps and develop recruitment strategies. Partnership boards must abide by the composition requirements contained in the First Steps legislation (Section 59-152-60(C) ~~@(1-3)~~)
 - Hold annual elections for partnership board officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, [Treasurer](#)). Officer terms are for one year. Board chair and vice chair terms cannot exceed 4 years (4 consecutive, one-year terms).
 - Ensure [elected](#) Board Members adhere to a current term on the board not to exceed 8 [consecutive](#) years (2 consecutive four-year terms) and [all board members](#) regularly attend meetings in accordance with [SC Statute and](#) local partnership By-Laws. [Appointed Board Members serve four-year terms with no term limits. A break in board service for elected Board Members must be at least six \(6\) months.](#)
 - Provide new members a comprehensive board orientation that addresses, at minimum:
 - a. First Steps mission/vision, structure, policies/procedures/standards for operation.
 - b. Local partnership administrative, financial and planning documents, including a summary of current program strategies.
 - c. Nonprofit Board Member Roles and Responsibilities.
 - Publish board member rosters in the Partnership's Annual Report and ensure they are reported annually to the partnership's legislative delegation and be on file with the Office of First Steps (~~Section 11.~~ Section 59-152-60(A)).



Fiscal Accountability

1. The local partnership board and staff shall exercise appropriate fiscal stewardship, including the use of private and non-state funds, by adhering to the policies and procedures outlined in the SC First Steps Legislation (~~Section 18~~-Section 59-152-150(A)), local partnership by-laws, local partnership grant agreement, and SC First Steps [Finance and Administration](#) Operations Manual.
- ~~1-2.~~ All private and non-state funds sought by local partnerships must be used exclusively for meeting the goals and purpose of First Steps as specified by SC Statute (59-152-20, 59-152-30).
- ~~2-3.~~ The local partnership board and staff shall monitor on an ongoing basis the financial condition of the partnership, to include but not limited to: revenue, expenditures and balances within all strategy areas, budget codes and funding sources. The local partnership board and staff shall comply with requirements for limiting administrative expenditures to at or below the rate established by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees. The maximum administrative rate for local partnerships, set by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees effective July 1, 2017, is 13% of expenditures of state funds allocated to the local partnership by SC First Steps.
- ~~3-4.~~ The local partnership board and staff shall comply with fiscal policies set by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees for state funding of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs, per First Steps legislative requirements.
- ~~4-5.~~ The local partnership board and staff shall ensure that funds granted to the partnership by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees are spent in a timely manner in service to children pre-birth to school entry within the partnership's service area. Partnerships shall monitor their formula allocated budget and expenditures closely to estimate the partnership's projected carry forward budget and submit a plan for how carry forward will be used in the next fiscal year as part of the partnership's board-approved Formula Funding grant application. The SC First Steps Finance Office will certify and notify partnerships of all prior fiscal year available carry forward budgets between October 1st and October 15th. Each partnership must submit budget reallocation requests to OFS before December 31 to add all carry forward to its Budget Spending Plan. Partnerships whose certified carry forward amount is 15% or more than its original formula allocated budget OR have changed their use of carry forward funds since their last approved budget change, must submit updated board minutes reflecting these changes.
 - For the first year, Partnerships whose certified carry forward budget exceeds 15% of the prior fiscal year's formula allocated budget will receive a corrective action plan AND must submit written justification to their SC First Steps Program Officer with a plan to be approved by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees (Program and Grants Committee) to reduce their amount of carry forward budget to under 15% for the next fiscal year.
 - For the second consecutive fiscal year, Partnerships whose carry forward budget exceeds 15% will remain under corrective action plan AND will be subject to potential withholding of their excess carry forward funds at the discretion of the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.
- ~~5-6.~~ The local partnership staff should process vendor invoices for payments upon receipt, obtain board member signature according to the SC First Steps [Finance and Administration](#) Operations Manual and immediately forward to the contracted finance manager for payment. Fees and/or penalties due to late payments are unacceptable and will be captured in a separate model code and monitored by SC First Steps Finance staff.
- ~~6-7.~~ The local partnership board and staff shall exercise appropriate stewardship and due care in the selection, implementation, and monitoring of all contractors and the administration of all contracts. It is the partnership's responsibility to ensure contractors comply with all programmatic and financial requirements contained in the partnership and program guidelines, partnership grant agreement with SC First Steps, and the SC First Steps [Finance and Administration](#) Operations Manual.
- ~~7-8.~~ Financial reports should be presented at all local partnership board meetings.
- ~~8-9.~~ The local partnership board and staff should review internal financial controls annually.

- ~~9-10.~~ The local partnership board and staff shall adhere to the fiscal calendar deadlines outlined in the SC First Steps [Finance and Administration](#) Operations Manual. In summary, funds must be obligated by June 30, invoices and reallocations submitted by July 31, and documentation of in-kind match submitted by July 31. Local partnerships must adhere to the SC First Steps written financial year-end closing process. Books will be closed on August 15 and any changes after then will be applied to the next fiscal year.
- ~~10-11.~~ Local partnerships shall submit a 12-week time allocation study for executive directors and staff with shared costs across programs, administration, and core services by April 15 on an annual basis.
- ~~11-12.~~ The local partnership board and staff shall respond in a timely manner to all requests from the contracted finance manager. The contracted finance manager shall support local partnerships' financial operations as outlined in its contract with SC First Steps.
- ~~12-13.~~ A financial audit shall be conducted annually to include implementing a corrective action plan to address issues, concerns, or recommendations in the identified area of partnerships activities as called for in the audit. The local partnership board and staff shall respond in a timely manner to requests from the independent contracted auditors. The auditor shall periodically conduct on-site visits to the local partnership to test internal procedures and controls.
14. For equipment or furnishing costing \$1,000 or more, the partnership shall implement controls and procedures contained in its partnership grant agreement (13: Title to Equipment). This equipment and furnishing must be coded-classified in accordance with the SC First Steps [Finance and Administration](#) Operations Manual, Chapter 5, Model Titles and Codes, Equipment and Furnishing – Purchased, code 5401.
- ~~13-15.~~ Local Partnerships will adhere to the Procurement Guidelines as established by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees.



Core Functions

- A First Steps Partnership Board shall, among its other powers and duties:
 - coordinate a collaborative effort at the county or multicounty level which will bring the community together to identify the area needs related to the goals of First Steps to School Readiness; develop a strategic long-term plan for meeting those needs; develop specific initiatives to implement the elements of the plan; and integrate service delivery where possible; and
 - coordinate and oversee the implementation of the comprehensive strategic plan including, but not limited to, direct service provision, contracting for service provision, and organization and management of volunteer programs-

- Effective July 1, 2016, each partnership's comprehensive plan shall include the following core functions:
 - service as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children;
 - serve as a community convener around the needs of preschool children and their families, to include mobilizing communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed;
 - support of state-level school readiness priorities as determined by the State Board
 - community mobilization;

In addition, partnerships will:

 - conduct a needs assessment every 3 years; and
 - collect information and submit an annual report by October first to the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, and otherwise participate in the annual review and the three-year evaluation of operations and programs. Before December 1, 2017, and annually before December first thereafter, the Office of South Carolina First Steps shall publish each local partnership's comprehensive strategic plan and annual report on the office's website. Reports must include, but not be limited to:
 - i. determination of the current level and data pertaining to the delivery and effectiveness of services for young children and their families, including the numbers of preschool children and their families served;
 - ii. strategic goals for increased availability, accessibility, quality, and efficiency of activities and services for young children and their families which will enable children to reach school ready to succeed; monitoring of progress toward strategic goals;
 - iii. report on implementation activities;
 - iv. recommendations for changes to the strategic plan which may include new areas of implementation;
 - v. evaluation and report of program effectiveness and client satisfaction before, during, and after the implementation of the strategic plan, where available; and
 - vi. estimation of cost savings attributable to increased efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of services to young children and their families, where available.

- Local Partnerships will maintain data collection records on Core Function and Community Education/Outreach activities. SC First Steps will provide a template for annual reporting of Core Function outputs.
 - i. Core Functions numbers served will be counted as connections with program participants (rather than encounters with community members).
 - ii. Meaningful core functions activities, events and connections are defined as those connections that impact the early childhood community aswhere possible program participants, can be referred for early childhood services and promote the health, safety, and school readiness priorities for children 0-5 years old, including but not limited to distribution of books, early learning materials and health/nutrition materials.

- iii. Cases Data entry may be required if Core Function activities are to include ongoing services to children and families.
- iv. In order to count individuals for reporting in the Core Functions numbers served, Local Partnerships must collect contact information (phone, text, mail, and/or email) from potential program participants.
- ii-v. Core Functions activities will focus only on external community engagement. The external community is defined as those are not directly involved with the interworking and governing of the local partnership.
 - o The local partnership board shall update its community Needs and Resources Assessment every three years, in accordance with First Steps legislation (Section 59-152-70(A (5))) as a basis for community-wide planning efforts to support at-risk children and the partnership's Comprehensive Strategic Plan. This document shall be submitted to SCFS by December 31 of the year in which the previous needs and resources assessment expires.
 - o Within the Formula Funding Grant Application and Budget Spending Plan, the partnership must provide information regarding the activities to be funded in support of Core Functions. Local partnerships are to appropriate not more than 12% of state funds for these purposes.
 - o Partnerships providing – or seeking to provide - services within another First Steps partnership's designated coverage area are required to communicate and collaborate with the affected partnership(s) and to document these collaborative efforts formally.

Core Function Categories

Local Portal Activities

Effective July 1, 2016, the local partnership **shall serve as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children** (~~Section 12-~~Section 59-152-70(4)(a)). These services shall be represented in the partnership's Comprehensive Strategic Plan and include, at minimum:

- o **Accessibility** Dedicated physical space within the partnership's county and with appropriate signage that is accessible to the public and clients they serve. Additionally, this official Local Partnership address must have a set weekly schedule and publicized hours. The Local Partnership shall adhere to publicized office hours.
- o **Responsiveness to requests for assistance** Phone access must be available during regular business hours each week that includes voice mail and the capability to receive and return messages (phone, text, email, etc.) in a timely manner.
- o **Referrals** Activities must include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Maintaining an up-to-date inventory of available programs and services for referring families. An up-to-date list of community resources should be available to clients, community partners, and the state office of First Steps at all times; including, providing local/regional resource directories (print and/or online) of local partnerships programs/services and community resources.
 - ii. Sharing information about the First Five SC portal with families and receiving applications and referrals from First Five SC portal.
 - iii. Partnership staff and volunteers who provide these services shall possess the requisite knowledge of and relationships with providers to connect families.
 - iv. Making referrals by phone, online resources, and/or social media for children 0-5 and families not enrolled in First Steps services
 - v. Connecting to services and programs not provided by First Steps (*E.g. Benefit Bank; Medicaid; Parent and Family Resource Center; Federal & State Emergency Aid; ~~Disaster~~Aid; ~~Disaster~~ Assistance*); etc.)
- o **Developmental Screenings** Provide developmental screenings to prioritize family's needs and referrals for children 0-5 and families not enrolled in First Steps services.

Community Convener and Mobilizing the Community

As a component of community mobilization, starting July 1, 2016, local partnerships shall serve as a **community convener around the needs of preschool children and their families** (~~Section 12-~~Section 59-152-70(4)(b)). This function shall be represented in the partnership's Comprehensive Strategic Plan and include, at minimum:

- The partnership board should identify one or more unmet needs impacting preschool children and their families from: their most recent Needs and Resources Assessment; and/or school readiness priorities outlined in the SC First Steps Board's Strategic Plan.
- The partnership leading or serving as a collaborating partner in establishing and coordinating a community-wide effort to address the identified need(s), with the active involvement of partnership board members and staff.
- Local Team Meetings: it is recommended that the local partnership convene, at least annually, a meeting between partnership staff and a member of the SCFS local partnership Program Officer team, including (if applicable) representatives from state First Steps programs located within the partnership's service area, for the purpose of improving coordination and collaboration across state and local First Steps programs and with other programs and services in the community (~~Section 12.~~Section 59-152-70 (A)(4)(c)). Partnerships are encouraged to expand these meetings to include representatives from partner organizations and other community stakeholders. Activities may include but are not limited to:
 - i. Convening of state and community partnerships, local 4K, and First Steps 4K
 - ii. Advocating for the well-being of children 0–5 through meeting with legislative members and other local and state entities within the county
 - iii. Public forums (i.e. surveys, focus groups, trainings) targeting parents, other community agencies, and/or school districts and teachers
- Goals and objectives for the partnership's role as a community convener, as determined by the partnership board and Executive Director. Progress reports documenting the success of convener activities should be made available to the partnership board and the public at least quarterly.
- Participation in local/county/regional coalitions, committees etc. of child-serving agencies and organizations

The local partnership board and staff shall participate in and document efforts to mobilize communities (all stakeholder groups including but not limited to: families, community leaders, businesses, faith-based organizations, civic organizations, elected officials and government agencies, health care entities, school personnel and other early childhood agencies/organizations) to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed (Section 8. Section 59-152-30(5)). Community action may include but is not limited to: developing and distributing public education materials that promote the partnership's mission, available programs, and community resources; and sponsoring and/or co-sponsoring community events that promote school readiness.

○ Community Education and Outreach Plan

- The local partnership board shall develop an annual Community Education and Outreach Plan to raise awareness, knowledge, engagement, participation and support for early childhood programs and services, including First Steps and in support of required Core Functions Partnerships shall engage in online and social media and to have a social media policy as a part of their plan.
- Plan components include:
 - i. Increasing awareness and engagement of target audiences in supporting early childhood programs and the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner
 - ii. Supporting the partnership's core function as a local portal
 - iii. Supporting the partnership's core function as a community convener
 - iv. Supporting the partnership's core function to address one or more state-level school readiness priorities
 - v. Increasing the knowledge and skills, and/or changing behaviors of target audiences in one or more areas of school readiness, child development best practices, etc. Refer to the Community Education and Outreach Plan Template for additional strategies/activities and examples
 - vi. Outreach to target audiences to increase their participation in programs and services supporting children 0-5 and their families
 - vii. Designating a point of contact to access lead information for potentially eligible families from First Five SC
 - viii. Increasing financial and other support for early childhood programs and services
 - ix. Engaging target audiences in working to improve community performance on school readiness

benchmarks (Profile of the Ready Kindergartner, Palmetto Basics) and/or the state's readiness assessment

Supporting State Level Priorities

Effective July 1, 2016, the local partnership shall support the state-level school readiness priorities as determined by the State Board (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(A)(c)). These priorities shall be represented in the partnership's Comprehensive [Strategic Plan](#) and must include:

- Increasing community awareness, education and outreach for programs and activities based on school readiness benchmarks as established by the State Board (Section 1. Section 59 -152- 32(A)((2)), e.g., Profile of the Ready Kindergartner and the South Carolina Early Learning Standards
- Programs and activities based on priorities in the SC First Steps Strategic Plan approved by the state First Steps board and legislative goals of SC First Steps (Section 1. Section 59 -152- 32(A)((2))
- Support and collaboration with state First Steps programs, including First Steps 4K programs
- Supporting the implementation of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to include sharing local school district KRA results with stakeholders, including teachers and parents of programs supported with First Steps funds (Section 1. Section 59 -152-33(D))
- Other state level priorities as determined by the State Board
- Utilizing First Five county level log-ins to respond to all applications within five (5) business days and identify potential clients and generate recruitment plans to increase enrollment for First Steps programs, and respond to all applications within five (5) business days.
- Encouraging families to utilize First Five SC to access publicly funded resources that promote the well-being of children

Mobilizing Local Communities

~~The local partnership board and staff shall participate in and document efforts to mobilize communities (all stakeholder groups including but not limited to: families, community leaders, businesses, faith-based organizations, civic organizations, elected officials and government agencies, health care entities, school personnel and other early childhood agencies/organizations) to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed (Section 8. Section 59-152-30(5)). Community action may include but is not limited to: developing and distributing public education materials that promote the partnership's mission, available programs, and community resources; and sponsoring and/or co-sponsoring community events that promote school readiness.~~

~~○ Community Education and Outreach Plan~~

- ~~• The local partnership board shall develop an annual Community Education and Outreach Plan to raise awareness, knowledge, engagement, participation and support for early childhood programs and services, including First Steps and in support of required Core Functions Partnerships shall engage in online and social media and to have a social media policy as a part of their plan.~~
- ~~• Plan components include:
 - i. Increasing awareness and engagement of target audiences in supporting early childhood programs and the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner
 - ii. Supporting the partnership's core function as a local portal
 - iii. Supporting the partnership's core function as a community convener
 - iv. Supporting the partnership's core function to address one or more state-level school readiness priorities
 - v. Increasing the knowledge and skills, and/or changing behaviors of target audiences in one or more areas of school readiness, child development best practices, etc. Refer to the Community Education and Outreach Plan Template for additional strategies/activities and examples
 - vi. Outreach to target audiences to increase their participation in programs and services supporting children 0-5 and their families
 - vii. Designating a point of contact to access lead information for potentially eligible families from First Five SC
 - viii. Increasing financial and other support for early childhood programs and services
 - Engaging target audiences in working to improve community performance on school readiness~~

benchmarks (Profile of the Ready Kindergartner, Palmetto Basics) and/or the state's readiness assessment

- ~~— Convening of state and community partnerships, local 4K, and First Steps 4K~~
- ~~— Advocating for the well-being of children 0-5 through meeting with legislative members and other local and state entities within the county~~
- ~~• Public forums (i.e., surveys, focus groups, trainings) targeting parents, other community agencies, and/or school districts and teachers.~~
- ~~○ Maintain data collection records on Core Function and Community Education/Outreach activities. SC First Steps will provide a template for annual reporting of Core Function outputs. Cases Data entry may be required if Core Function activities are to include ongoing services to children and families.~~
- ~~○ The local partnership board shall update its community Needs and Resources Assessment every three years, in accordance with First Steps legislation (Section 12. Section 59-152-70(A (5))) as a basis for community-wide planning efforts to support at-risk children and the partnership's Comprehensive Strategic Plan. This document shall be submitted to SCFS by December 31 of the year in which the previous needs and resources assessment expires.~~
- ~~○ Within the Formula Funding Grant Application and Budget Spending Plan, the partnership must provide information regarding the activities to be funded in support of Core Functions. Local partnerships are to appropriate not more than 12% of state funds for these purposes.~~
- ~~○ Partnerships providing – or seeking to provide – services within another First Steps partnership's designated coverage area are required to communicate and collaborate with the affected partnership(s) and to document these collaborative efforts formally.~~



Resource Development

1. The local partnership board shall engage in resource development responsibilities that maximize the use of in-kind (volunteers, goods, services, and facilities) and cash contributions to the partnership. Partnerships must document a minimum 15% match (cash and/or in-kind) to state funds appropriated to the partnership in the current fiscal year by SC First Steps (~~Section 16.~~ Section 59-152-130(A)). While the Board of SC First Steps may or may not choose to grant a 15% match waiver for a first-year request, the Board will not grant a 15% match waiver for 2 consecutive years. If the Board of Trustees does not grant a match waiver, the State Office of First Steps will recapture from the local partnership's current year state funds the amount equal to the matching funds due, but not raised to meet the 15% match requirement at the conclusion of the prior fiscal year
Responsibilities include:
 - Develop and submit an updated Resource Development Plan annually as part of the local partnership's Formula Funding Grant Application, which includes shared responsibility for resource development by board members and staff.
 - Assurance of adequate resources to support the local partnership board's strategies/programs.
2. The local partnership board shall conduct fundraising activities in an ethical and fiscally responsible manner. A written process shall be developed to address the handling and acknowledgment of contributions and respect for donor confidentiality requests.
3. The local partnership board shall:
 - Accurately describe the purpose for fundraising activities.
 - Expend funds for the purpose they were solicited.
 - Maintain accounting segregation for restricted funds.
 - Raise funds in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal requirements.
4. The local partnership board will seek opportunities to collaborate with other partnerships and/or agencies/organizations to raise funds to meet the needs of at-risk children.
5. The partnership board and staff shall document in-kind contributions to the partnership in the format specified in the SC First Steps [Finance and Administration](#) Operations Manual and provide timely submission of in-kind documentation to the Finance Manager. All in-kind documentation and budget reallocations of in-kind funds must comply with fiscal year-end deadlines (~~Section 16.~~ Section 59-152-130(B)).



First Steps Program Guidelines



General Program Guidelines

1. Implement program strategies in accordance with SC First Steps Partnership and Program Guidelines, exercise due diligence when selecting program strategies and, when establishing new program strategies, commit to allowing sufficient time for successful implementation (min. 2 years recommended).
2. Program strategies, including those funded by private and non-state funds, must support one or more First Steps goals (~~Section 13.~~ Section 59-152-90(C)(c); Section 18. Section 59-152-150(C)) and address unmet needs identified in the partnership's needs and resource assessment and Comprehensive [Strategic Plan](#). Partnership funds granted by the SC First Steps Board must comply with provisions for use of grant funds contained in the First Steps legislation (~~Section 14.~~ Section 59-152-100(A)).
3. Program strategies must utilize the SC First Steps to School Readiness benchmarks and objectives (Profile of the Ready Kindergartner) (~~Section 13.~~ Section 59-152-90(C)(b)).
4. At least 75% of state funds appropriated for programs must be used by the local partnership for "evidence-based" programs. Not more than 25% of state funds appropriated for programs to a local partnership may be used for "evidence-informed" programs (~~Section 14.~~ Section 59-152-100(B)). Per First Steps legislation, this provision is based upon the list of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs adopted by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees, posted to the SC First Steps web site.
5. Program strategies must be adequately resourced (staff, funding).
6. Partnerships must closely monitor program vendors/contractors to ensure compliance with operational guidelines. Partnerships should review contract provisions and the scope of work each year to ensure all program model components and operational guidelines are addressed. Vendor contracts for program strategies shall include as an attachment, the applicable current year's First Steps program guidelines for that strategy.
7. State funds appropriated for Partnership services are intended for use within the geographical boundaries of each individual partnership. Partnership strategies may - on a limited basis and with approval by the partnership's board - serve clients not geographically located within the partnership's service area if strong justification exists for such services to be provided. Examples include but are not limited to: high-risk families living just outside the county but within close proximity to partnership programs; and child care providers not located within the county but serving a substantial number of high-risk children from the partnership's service area. In such cases, partnership staff are required to inform, coordinate, and collaborate with the local First Steps partnership in which the client is located.
8. Partnership executive directors and staff must ensure complete and accurate data is collected to measure program results and client satisfaction, including accurate and complete data entered in the First Steps Data Collection System as required.
9. Program strategies using local district resources within a school district must be conducted only with approval of the district's board of trustees (~~Section 14.~~ Section 59-152-100(D)).
10. Partnership staff and volunteers who work directly with children shall be subject to SLED checks prior to hiring. Contractors must be able to provide this documentation upon request.
11. Per the partnership's grant agreement with SC First Steps, partnerships are responsible for reporting suspected child abuse, neglect or dependency, as defined and required by applicable law.
- ~~12.~~ Partnerships shall keep a waiting list of all program applicants who cannot be served due to the program's reaching its service capacity.

SC FIRST STEPS APPROVED RISK FACTORS:

*Child is defined as a preschool-aged child from the prenatal stage to entry into five-year-old kindergarten. (Section 59-152-25(E))

First Steps Risk Factor Revised
<u>The child has been abused.</u>
<u>The child has been neglected.</u>
<u>The child is in foster care or kinship care.</u>
<u>The child or family is enrolled in or eligible for Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF).</u>
<u>The child or family is enrolled in or eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).</u>
<u>The child has a disability or developmental delay as documented by a physician or standardized assessment (not a screening tool).</u>
<u>The child is blind or visually impaired.</u>
<u>The child is deaf or hearing impaired.</u>
<u>The child is eligible for IDEA Part B or Part C.</u>
<u>The child's mother or primary caregiver was 20 years old or younger at the time of the child's birth.</u>
<u>The child's mother or primary caregiver did not have a high school diploma or GED at the time of the child's birth.</u>
<u>The child's parent or caregiver has had a substance abuse issue during the child's lifetime.</u>
<u>The child's parent or caregiver has had depression or another mental health condition during the child's lifetime.</u>
<u>The child's parent or caregiver has an intellectual disability.</u>
<u>The child has been exposed to domestic violence within their family.</u>
<u>The child had a low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs) with serious medical complications.</u>
<u>English is not the primary language spoken in the child's home.</u>
<u>The child has a single parent or caregiver.</u>
<u>The child is experiencing homelessness.</u>
<u>The child has experienced numerous family relocations or transiency.</u>
<u>The child has a parent who is currently incarcerated or has been incarcerated within the last 12 months.</u>
<u>The child has experienced the death of a parent, caregiver, or sibling.</u>
<u>The child's parent or caregiver is currently serving in the military away from home or has returned home from military duty within the last two years.</u>
<u>The child is an immigrant or refugee.</u>
<u>The child has a parent or caregiver who was born in another country and entered the U.S. within the last five years.</u>

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

The child is enrolled in or eligible for Medicaid.

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



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees
From: Jessica Mackey, Chairman, Finance and Administration Committee
Date: January 31, 2024
RE: Finance and Administration Committee Report

The Finance and Administration Committee met via Zoom conference call on January 31, 2024, to take action on several items and to receive updates from staff. Detailed meeting minutes are attached. The committee brings forward the following action items to be included in the consent agenda and forwards the following updates.

ACTION: Approval of the Local Partnership Formula Allocations for the next fiscal year

The allocation model was presented to the committee based on the model previously approved by the Board of Trustees. Mr. Barnes briefly reviewed the model and the impact. He mentioned that in order to be consistent with the intentions of the Board, one minor adjustment had to be made to ensure the 3% adjustment cap was implemented from the prior year to the new one. The change simply makes the previous years adjusted amount the beginning place for the new year. After the introduction of the model and the change, there were a number of questions and discussion about the current model. The committee asked staff to take another look at the model to ensure needed movement of funds were occurring quickly enough.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the Formula Allocation Model and send it to the Board of Trustees. The Committee makes the following Motion:

Motion: To approve the formula allocation model for FY 2024-25.

ACTION: Approval of the Waiver Request from Abbeville County First Steps

A request was received from Abbeville County First Steps last year to waive the requirement for the 15% Carryforward rule. Waiving the rule would avoid Abbeville County First Steps from receiving a Corrective Action Plan for exceeding the Carryforward Amount in 2023. Staff is recommending approval for the FY 2022 fiscal year.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the waiver request from Abbeville County First Steps and send it to the Board of Trustees. The Committee makes the following Motion:

Motion: To approve the Waiver request from Abbeville County First Steps for exceeding the carryforward amount of state funds in FY 2022.

ACTION: Approval of corrective actions for local partnerships who exceed the carryforward amounts of state funds for the last two fiscal years.

The committee reviewed the list of local partnerships that exceeded their carryforward amounts of state funds for the last two fiscal years. Board policy has been to require a corrective action plan for any local partnership exceeds 15% carryforward two years in a row and recoup the amount over the 15% in the second year. After review, the committee would like additional information on why these partnerships exceeded the amount for two years and would like more discussion regarding the current Board policy.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the corrective action determinations. The Committee makes the following Motion:

Motion: The Finance and Administration Committee approves the corrective action determination as presented for the ten (10) local partnerships identified in the list (Aiken, Chester, Clarendon, Fairfield, Hampton, Jasper, Laurens, Marion, Marlboro, and Oconee Counties). As a result of corrective action, the local partnerships effected are not eligible to apply for competitive or targeted grants until they have satisfactorily resolved the deficiencies noted on their corrective action plan as determined by SC First Steps.

Based on the discussion regarding the corrective action determinations, the Committee also voted unanimously to submit the following Motion:

Motion: First Steps staff will evaluate the current Board Policy and corrective actions for Carryforward formula funding amounts for the local partnerships and come back with recommendations for updates.

First Steps State Office

Financial Report: Mr. Barnes shared the updated financial status of the agency along with the updated Donations Report. Expenditures to date are in line with projections for the new year and the organization is in good financial condition.

Local Partnership Update: We received updates on the implementation of Act 81. The Local Partnerships are in the process of transferring health insurance and retirement accounts to PEBA from the local school districts with most having an effective date of April 1, 2024.

4K Program: Projected spend down of the 4K cash balance will most likely be in the \$4 to \$4.5 million range during this fiscal year, due to increased number of students.

Other updates can be found in the meeting minutes.



Minutes from Finance and Administration Committee Meeting

January 31, 2024

Members present: Jessica Mackey, Chairman, Jacque Curtin, CPA, David Morley: Members not present: None

Nonmembers present: Mark Barnes, Director of Administration; Towanda Prior, Grants Accountant, CGFO; Annie Cherry, Local Partnership Financial Manager

With all public notices being provided, the Zoom meeting was called to order by Jessica Mackey at 10:04 am. After introductions, a quorum was available, so the Committee was called to order.

Approval of 2024-25 Local Partnership Allocations

Required Action Item: Approval of the Local Partnership Formula Allocations for the next fiscal year

Presentation by Mr. Barnes. The allocation model was presented to the committee based on the model previously approved by the Board of Trustees. Mr. Barnes briefly reviewed the model and the impact. He mentioned that in order to be consistent with the intentions of the Board, one minor adjustment had to be made to ensure the 3% adjustment cap was implemented from the prior year to the new one. The change simply makes the previous years adjusted amount the beginning place for the new year. After the introduction of the model and the change, there were a number of questions and discussion about the current model. Certain counties, who had apparent changes in the number of children less than 5, who live in homes with incomes at less than 185% of poverty, may not be moving the funds to other counties as quickly as desired. The committee discussed whether we should take another look at the model to speed up the movement of funds based on the numbers of children. Based on the approved model Jacque Curtin motioned to approve the current allocation model for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Dave Morley seconded the motion, the vote was requested and was passed.

The Committee also requested that another look be given to the model to determine if it should be adjusted to allow for faster movement of funds to counties with greater need based on the data. Staff will pursue the question and a review to be prepared to make possible recommendations later in this calendar year so they can be incorporated in the next years model, if needed.

Approval of Waiver Request

Required Action Item: Approval of the Waiver Request from Abbeville County First Steps

Presentation by Mr. Barnes. A request was received from Abbeville County First Steps last year to waive the requirement for the 15% Carryforward rule. Waiving the rule would avoid Abbeville County First Steps from receiving a Corrective Action Plan for exceeding the Carryforward Amount in 2023. Staff is recommending approval for the FY 2022 fiscal year. At that time the Local Partnership was under a Corrective Action Plan for a number of reasons. They were required to replace their Executive Director and were not awarded a new Formula Grant until August of 2022. Without an Executive Director, they did not have staff to manage the expenditures which would have allowed them to fully spend the required amount of formula funding for that year. Their funds were then shifted to another partnership to cover the cost of the services to children without interruption. Abbeville County First Steps hired a new Executive Director and completed their Corrective Action Plan.

There was general discussion, and a motion was made by Jacque Curtin to approve the waiver, David Morley seconded the motion. The vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

Mr. Barnes then suggested that the item under 3. C. 1. May be an item the Committee may want to take action on, so asked that it be moved to be addressed next on the agenda. The Committee agreed to take that item up next.

Discussion Item: Review of Local Partnership Financial Information

Staff presented the summary financial information for the Local Partnerships for the fiscal year ending 6-30-2023. This included reports for the following annual requirements:

1. Counties Administrative Cost: Required to be under 13% of State Funding
2. Counties Core Function Cost: Required to be under 12% of State Funding
3. Counties Match Report: Required to provide a minimum of 15% Match of State Funding
4. Counties State Funding Carryforward Report: Limited to 15% of State Funding
5. Counties Exceeding the amount of Carryforward two years in a row with amounts to recoup

All counties met the requirements for the Administrative Cost, Core Function Cost, and the Match Requirements. There were 12 counties that exceeded the Carryforward limitations for the second year. Board Policy has been to implement a Corrective Action Plan for exceeding the amount two years in a row, and to recoup the amount of the overage. Abbeville received a waiver for 2022, making this the first year they exceeded 15%, which would not require a Corrective Action Plan. Allendale exceeded the amount by \$429.05. The Committee requested they be removed from the list due to the small amount. The Committee then discussed the amounts and possible action. There was concern that taking these amounts from these counties would damage services to the children in those counties. Questions were raised about why these counties did not correct their spending plans prior to the end of 2023. There was discussion regarding whether the Board policy was the correct way to handle these overages. Staff presented a plan to analyze each county to determine what caused them to miss the target on spending and to incorporate that information in an appropriate Corrective Action plan. Finance staff would work with the Local Partnership staff to complete this work. After this discussion, the Committee made and approved two motions.

Action Item: Approve Corrective Action Plans for the Ten Local Partnerships Exceeding Carryforward limits. The following motion was made by David Morley, and seconded by Jacque Curtin.

Motion: The Finance and Administration Committee approves the corrective action determination as presented for the ten (10) local partnerships identified in the list (Aiken, Chester, Clarendon, Fairfield, Hampton, Jasper, Laurens, Marion, Marlboro, and Oconee Counties). As a result of corrective action, the local partnerships effected are not eligible to apply for competitive or targeted grants until they have satisfactorily resolved the deficiencies noted on their corrective action plan as determined by SC First Steps.

The committee voted to pass the motion.

An additional motion was made by Jacque Curtin and seconded by David Morley.

Motion: First Steps staff will evaluate the current Board Policy and corrective actions for Carryforward formula funding amounts for the local partnerships and come back with recommendations for updates.

The committee voted to pass the motion.

First Steps State Office

Financial Report: Mr. Barnes reviewed the monthly financial reports. The agency is in good financial condition. This discussion also included the amount spent to date and he reviewed the donations to date for this year. He mentioned that there were some minor updates to the reports with realigning some of the grant funds in the budget.

CFO Search: The search continues for the new CFO and we hope to fill the position soon.

State Budget Update: SC First Steps presented its budget request to the House Ways and Means Education Subcommittee recently. The Governor has made his recommendations which included \$362,089 for unfunded personnel cost increases, and \$6,897,691 for 4K for the FY 24-25 fiscal year. We are asking for about \$15 million in total. We also requested two changes to the 4K proviso, which would allow us to add Language and Literacy and Teacher Recruitment and Retention efforts to the program.

Staff mentioned they were moving forward with the separation from the Department of Education, based on the current proviso in the budget. The plan was presented to the General Assembly in December and the Executive Budget Office has signed off on the proposal for the new budget structure outside of the DOE. The plan is to separate on July 1, 2024.

Local Partnership Update: Mr. Barnes provided an update on Act 81 implementation. He mentioned work being done by our Legislative Liaison on the hiring and salary process for the local partnership executive directors. Meetings are being set up by the consultant to work through that process. Work is continuing on transitioning the local partnerships from having benefits through the local school districts to establishing their own accounts for PEBA benefits. This includes health insurance and retirement benefits for local partnership employees. The implementation date for these transitions is April 1, 2024. Additional webinars have been held with PEBA to assist in making that transition. Manley Garvin, the financial manager that works closely with the local partnerships will be providing benefits administration. We are also working to start the process for development of the HR policies for the local partnerships along with new procurement policies.

4K Program Update: As of the beginning of the year, the program had enrolled a record number of participants for the new year with an increase of 19% on day 45. We also have a record number of participating child care centers. We will most likely spend down about \$4.5 million in 4K cash reserves with the increase.

Other: Staff mentioned that SLED was conducting an active investigation for the ACH fraudulent transactions which resulted in a loss of approximate \$15,000.

With no further business to discuss for the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:26 am.



First Steps Local Partnership Allocation FY 2024-25

January 3, 2024

Enter total funds for allocation in E 4 Enter Initial Base Allocation in E 6 Instructions: Enter any noncompliance penalties in Column K Calculate Adjusted Base Allocation														Total Funds											Initial Base Allocation for Each County				
														\$14,435,228											\$200,000				
Additional allocation for counties with high numbers of children age 0-5 under 185% of poverty is calculated as follows: 1. Select counties that have more than 2800 children age 0-5 under 185% of poverty. Subtract 2800 from estimated number in column C. 2. Calculate percent of the total for each county with more than 2800 children. 3. Multiply percent by the amount available for allocation. 4. Add the adjusted base amount to the additional allocation.														Total Initial Base Allocation											Funds Available for Allocation = Total Funds Minus Total Initial Base	Subtotal Allocation	Total Noncompliance Penalties	Total Adjusted Base Allocation	
														\$9,200,000											\$5,235,228.00		\$0.00	\$14,435,228.00	
Sources:	U.S. Census Bureau: 2017-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table 17024			Initial Base Allocation	Low Income	Counties with large numbers of low income children				Adjusted change in # of Children	Adjusted # of Children	Percentage for additional allocation	Additional Allocation	Subtotal Allocation	Minus Noncompliance Penalty	Total Allocation													
County	Estimated number below age 6 for whom poverty was determined	Estimated number below age 6 less than 185% poverty	Estimated percent below age 6 less than 185% poverty		County Percent of Population Below Age 6 Less Than 185% Poverty	2022 Estimate Above 2800	2023-24 Adjusted # of Children	Percentage Change	Max 3% Change Allowable																				
South Carolina	334,324	141,906	42.4%		100.00%																								
Abbeville	1,354	633	46.8%	\$200,000	0.45%							\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000														
Aiken	11,015	4,355	39.5%	\$200,000	3.07%	1,555	2,966	-24.47%	-3.00%	(173)	2,793	0.042	\$218,636	\$418,636	\$0	\$418,636													
Allendale	378	279	73.8%	\$200,000	0.20%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Anderson	13,663	5,675	41.5%	\$200,000	4.00%	2,875	3,028	-2.63%	-2.63%	(153)	2,875	0.043	\$225,078	\$425,078	\$0	\$425,078													
Bamberg	803	489	60.9%	\$200,000	0.34%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Barnwell	1,573	1,256	79.8%	\$200,000	0.89%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Beaufort	10,602	4,854	45.8%	\$200,000	3.42%	2,054	2,617	-10.40%	-3.00%	(163)	2,455	0.037	\$192,192	\$392,192	\$0	\$392,192													
Berkeley	17,339	6,485	37.4%	\$200,000	4.57%	3,685	4,172	-6.99%	-3.00%	(209)	3,963	0.059	\$310,249	\$510,249	\$0	\$510,249													
Calhoun	668	402	60.2%	\$200,000	0.28%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Charleston	27,123	8,401	31.0%	\$200,000	5.92%	5,601	6,552	-10.17%	-3.00%	(281)	6,271	0.094	\$490,962	\$690,962	\$0	\$690,962													
Cherokee	4,102	2,426	59.1%	\$200,000	1.71%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Chester	2,245	1,348	60.0%	\$200,000	0.95%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Chesterfield	2,776	1,625	58.5%	\$200,000	1.15%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Clarendon	1,634	850	52.0%	\$200,000	0.60%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Colleton	2,498	1,440	57.6%	\$200,000	1.01%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Darlington	4,013	2,279	56.8%	\$200,000	1.61%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Dillon	2,237	1,536	68.7%	\$200,000	1.08%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Dorchester	10,484	3,469	33.1%	\$200,000	2.44%	669	1,107	-11.21%	-3.00%	(117)	990	0.015	\$77,501	\$277,501	\$0	\$277,501													
Edgefield	1,073	526	49.0%	\$200,000	0.37%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Fairfield	1,285	782	60.9%	\$200,000	0.55%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Florence	10,031	4,904	48.9%	\$200,000	3.46%	2,104	2,682	-10.55%	-3.00%	(164)	2,518	0.038	\$197,127	\$397,127	\$0	\$397,127													
Georgetown	3,164	1,678	53.0%	\$200,000	1.18%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Greenville	37,616	13,956	37.1%	\$200,000	9.83%	11,156	10,834	2.36%	2.36%	322	11,156	0.167	\$873,382	\$1,073,382	\$0	\$1,073,382													
Greenwood	5,088	3,287	64.6%	\$200,000	2.32%	487	581	-2.79%	-2.79%	(94)	487	0.007	\$38,126	\$238,126	\$0	\$238,126													
Hampton	1,222	771	63.1%	\$200,000	0.54%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Horry	17,966	7,984	44.4%	\$200,000	5.63%	5,184	6,340	-12.65%	-3.00%	(274)	6,066	0.091	\$474,903	\$674,903	\$0	\$674,903													
Jasper	1,556	923	59.3%	\$200,000	0.65%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Kershaw	4,098	1,552	37.9%	\$200,000	1.09%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Lancaster	6,367	2,560	40.2%	\$200,000	1.80%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Laurens	4,550	2,325	51.1%	\$200,000	1.64%		0						\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Lee	888	600	67.6%	\$200,000	0.42%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Lexington	19,950	8,356	41.9%	\$200,000	5.89%	5,556	5,533	0.28%	0.28%	23	5,556	0.083	\$434,969	\$634,969	\$0	\$634,969													
McCormick	254	139	54.7%	\$200,000	0.10%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Marion	1,629	1,186	72.8%	\$200,000	0.84%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Marlboro	1,597	1,115	69.8%	\$200,000	0.79%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Newberry	2,264	883	39.0%	\$200,000	0.62%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Oconee	4,278	2,179	50.9%	\$200,000	1.54%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Orangeburg	5,057	3,107	61.4%	\$200,000	2.19%	307	1,006	-18.37%	-3.00%	(114)	892	0.013	\$69,840	\$269,840	\$0	\$269,840													
Pickens	7,014	2,706	38.6%	\$200,000	1.91%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Richland	26,875	11,337	42.2%	\$200,000	7.99%	8,537	9,440	-7.38%	-3.00%	(367)	9,073	0.136	\$710,292	\$910,292	\$0	\$910,292													
Saluda	1,251	619	49.5%	\$200,000	0.44%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Spartanburg	23,601	9,775	41.4%	\$200,000	6.89%	6,975	6,893	0.84%	0.84%	82	6,975	0.104	\$546,059	\$746,059	\$0	\$746,059													
Sumter	8,475	3,566	42.1%	\$200,000	2.51%	766	1,935	-24.68%	-3.00%	(142)	1,793	0.027	\$140,334	\$340,334	\$0	\$340,334													
Union	1,812	1,084	59.8%	\$200,000	0.76%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
Williamsburg	1,748	1,051	60.1%	\$200,000	0.74%								\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000													
York	19,108	5,153	27.0%	\$200,000	3.63%	2,353	3,189	-13.96%	-3.00%	(180)	3,009	0.045	\$235,578	\$435,578	\$0	\$435,578													
				\$9,200,000		59,864	68,876			100.00%	66,871		\$5,235,228	\$14,435,228	\$0	\$14,435,228													



Allocation Change between FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25

3-Jan-24

County	Total Allocation 2023-24	Total Allocation 2024-25	Change	Percentage Change
Abbeville	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Aiken	425,369	418,636	-6,733	-1.58%
Allendale	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Anderson	430,105	425,078	-5,027	-1.17%
Bamberg	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Barnwell	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Beaufort	398,907	392,192	-6,715	-1.68%
Berkeley	517,046	510,249	-6,797	-1.31%
Calhoun	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Charleston	697,885	690,962	-6,924	-0.99%
Cherokee	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Chester	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Chesterfield	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Clarendon	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Colleton	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Darlington	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Dillon	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Dorchester	284,136	277,501	-6,635	-2.34%
Edgefield	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Fairfield	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Florence	403,845	397,127	-6,718	-1.66%
Georgetown	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Greenville	1,023,327	1,073,382	50,055	4.89%
Greenwood	244,184	238,126	-6,057	-2.48%
Hampton	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Horry	681,816	674,903	-6,912	-1.01%
Jasper	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Kershaw	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Lancaster	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Laurens	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Lee	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Lexington	620,466	634,969	14,502	2.34%
McCormick	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Marion	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Marlboro	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Newberry	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Oconee	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Orangeburg	276,470	269,840	-6,630	-2.40%
Pickens	201,135	200,000	-1,135	-0.56%
Richland	917,369	910,292	-7,077	-0.77%
Saluda	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Spartanburg	723,832	746,059	22,227	3.07%
Sumter	347,013	340,334	-6,679	-1.92%
Union	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
Williamsburg	200,000	200,000	0	0.00%
York	442,323	435,578	-6,745	-1.52%
Totals	14,435,228	14,435,228	0	0.00%



394 Hwy 28 Bypass
Abbeville, SC 29620
(864) 378-8575
rlyman@acsdsc.org

May 24, 2023

Mr. Mark Barnes
S.C. First Steps
636 Rosewood Drive
Columbia, SC 29206

Dear Mr. Barnes:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Abbeville County First Steps, I am requesting consideration of a waiver for a potential corrective action plan resulting from the organization exceeding the 15 percent carry forward funds policy into fiscal year 2024. As you are aware, FY23 has been a transitional year for the organization resulting in many changes, challenges and departures from the normal operating standards we have come to expect. Some of the challenges we have had to manage this year include:

1. Removal of the Executive Director (Angela Pruitt) on June 16, 2022 and the designation of an acting Executive Director, serving in a dual role and at a transitional salary level.
2. Minimal turnover time between the former Executive Director and the newly appointed acting Executive Director, resulting in an extended ramp up period.
3. The former Parent Educator serving in a dual role as Acting Executive Director and Parent Educator for the majority of FY23.
4. Inheriting significant FY22 carry forward funding in the FY23 budget.
5. The inability to hire any support staff until the Abbeville County First Steps Board made the hiring decision for the permanent Executive Director position.
6. Planning and execution of a move to new operating headquarters.

Since the Executive Director hiring decision on March 8, 2023, we have begun taking the necessary steps required to bring the county's budget in line with SC First Steps' expectations. The Executive Director's salary was increased to a level commensurate with the position. Additionally, the hiring process was initiated to fill the full and part time Parent Educator positions, successfully executed the move to the new operating facility, along with procurement of all automated equipment and furnishings required.

We will soon begin implementation of the initiatives identified in our FY24 strategic plan. The plan includes the introduction of new programs such as Parents as Teachers, Raising a Reader, and Countdown to Kindergarten. We anticipate the normalization of operations and to be in full budget compliance heading into FY25, without the need for a corrective action plan.

Thank you for consideration.

Sincerely,

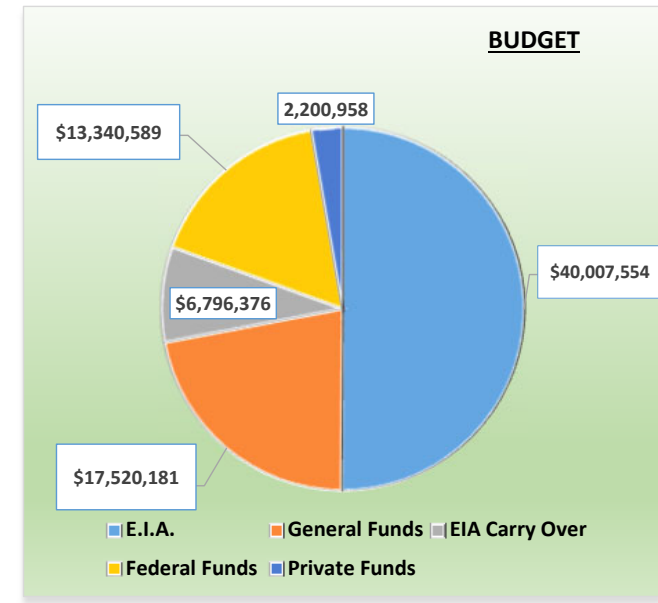
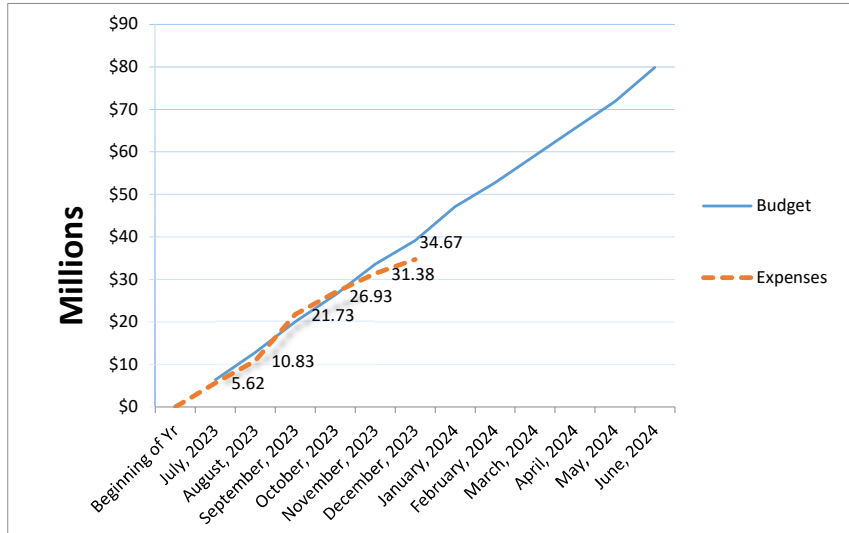
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Lyman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Rebecca Lyman
Executive Director

Carry-Forward Totals and Percentages							
		1/19/2024		FY-23 Fund 550 with Balance >15%			
Fiscal Year Closing Balances							
#	PARTNERSHIP	FY-22 Cash Balance	FY-22 Allocation	FY-22 Percentage Carry-Forward	FY-23 Fund 550 Cash Balance	FY-23 Allocation	FY-23 Percentage Carry-Forward
01	Abbeville	\$45,708.33	200,000	22.85%	\$93,659.18	183,333	51.09%
02	Aiken	\$206,178.92	431,622	47.77%	\$224,925.40	431,622	52.11%
03	Allendale	\$46,990.45	200,000	23.50%	\$30,429.05	200,000	15.21%
04	Anderson	\$48,225.24	411,437	11.72%	\$40,390.30	411,437	9.82%
05	Bamberg	\$28,041.21	200,000	14.02%	\$45,253.68	200,000	22.63%
06	Barnwell	\$13,959.73	200,000	6.98%	\$16,903.86	200,000	8.45%
07	Beaufort	\$33,965.75	405,174	8.38%	\$27,800.09	405,174	6.86%
08	Berkeley	\$68,062.16	492,401	13.82%	\$112,651.04	492,401	22.88%
09	Calhoun	\$13,397.77	200,000	6.70%	\$0.00	200,000	0.00%
10	Charleston	\$79,800.97	703,985	11.34%	\$53,315.47	703,985	7.57%
11	Cherokee	\$13,741.05	200,000	6.87%	\$8,106.94	200,000	4.05%
12	Chester	\$53,297.53	200,000	26.65%	\$49,032.21	200,000	24.52%
13	Chesterfield	\$11,519.12	200,000	5.76%	\$11,409.69	200,000	5.70%
14	Clarendon	\$59,053.59	200,000	29.53%	\$97,346.51	200,000	48.67%
15	Colleton	\$22,116.79	200,000	11.06%	\$35,158.94	200,000	17.58%
16	Darlington	\$135.66	204,420	0.07%	\$2,777.80	204,420	1.36%
17	Dillon	\$2,733.42	200,000	1.37%	\$8.12	200,000	0.00%
18	Dorchester	\$28,743.64	290,468	9.90%	\$10,112.46	290,468	3.48%
19	Edgefield	\$18,385.14	200,000	9.19%	\$28,774.42	200,000	14.39%
20	Fairfield	\$82,976.23	200,000	41.49%	\$36,064.20	200,000	18.03%
21	Florence	\$54,041.42	410,110	13.18%	\$66,026.13	410,110	16.10%
22	Georgetown	\$8,511.21	200,000	4.26%	\$6,106.38	200,000	3.05%
23	Greenville	\$64,257.91	1,029,244	6.24%	\$33,630.67	1,029,244	3.27%
24	Greenwood	\$7,751.93	250,538	3.09%	\$20,013.94	250,538	7.99%
25	Hampton	\$48,297.81	200,000	24.15%	\$73,944.58	200,000	36.97%
26	Horry	\$179,707.61	687,925	26.12%	\$82,381.75	687,925	11.98%
27	Jasper	\$53,006.53	200,000	26.50%	\$36,718.87	200,000	18.36%
28	Kershaw	\$15,041.17	200,000	7.52%	\$16,502.31	200,000	8.25%
29	Lancaster	\$1,911.10	200,000	0.96%	\$8,735.78	200,000	4.37%
30	Laurens	\$30,717.34	200,000	15.36%	\$68,174.31	200,000	34.09%
31	Lee	\$29,922.70	200,000	14.96%	\$29,755.41	200,000	14.88%
32	Lexington	\$84,573.12	594,362	14.23%	\$85,271.26	594,362	14.35%
33	Marion	\$43,169.72	200,000	21.58%	\$38,314.84	200,000	19.16%
34	Marlboro	\$42,033.48	200,000	21.02%	\$54,971.99	200,000	27.49%
35	McCormick	\$21,280.08	200,000	10.64%	\$9,965.50	200,000	4.98%
36	Newberry	\$12,728.91	200,000	6.36%	\$10,727.83	200,000	5.36%
37	Oconee	\$31,663.79	200,000	15.83%	\$40,528.10	200,000	20.26%
38	Orangeburg	\$28,038.01	282,807	9.91%	\$7,212.50	282,807	2.55%
39	Pickens	\$16,645.05	207,514	8.02%	\$26,993.26	207,514	13.01%
40	Richland	\$43,417.85	901,424	4.82%	\$83,099.83	901,424	9.22%
41	Saluda	\$22,265.66	200,000	11.13%	\$21,613.49	200,000	10.81%
42	Spartanburg	\$62,186.94	729,917	8.52%	\$38,489.06	729,917	5.27%
43	Sumter	\$23,178.68	353,310	6.56%	\$35,105.30	353,310	9.94%
44	Union	\$17,238.44	200,000	8.62%	\$24,927.94	200,000	12.46%
45	Williamsburg	\$8,676.82	200,000	4.34%	\$2,630.95	200,000	1.32%
46	York	\$29,248.73	448,567	6.52%	\$12,327.46	448,567	2.75%
TOTAL		\$1,856,544.71	\$14,435,228.00		\$1,858,288.80	\$14,418,561.00	

**As of
December 31, 2023**

Spending Rates	
Projected	50%
Actual	43%



PROGRAMS / OPERATIONS Description	STATE APPROPRIATIONS			FEDERAL GRANTS			PRIVATE FUNDS			GRAND TOTAL		
	Budget	Expended	Balance	Budget	Expended	Balance	Budget	Expended	Balance	Budget	Expended	Balance
LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS	23,506,624	10,246,296	13,260,328	8,044,994	3,284,935	\$ 4,760,059	2,020,458	34,660	1,985,798	33,572,076	13,565,891	\$ 20,006,185
PRIVATE 4-K	36,719,794	18,959,824	17,759,970	2,607,565	0	2,607,565			-	39,327,359	18,959,824	\$ 20,367,535
EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL	1,160,993	11,255	1,149,738	1,935,323	480,448	1,454,875	78,000	11,593	66,407	3,174,316	503,296	\$ 2,671,020
POLICY & ACCOUNTABILITY	2,936,700	1,128,514	1,808,186	752,707	226,351	526,356	102,500	69,835	32,665	3,791,907	1,424,699	\$ 2,367,208
GRAND TOTAL:	64,324,111	30,345,889	33,978,222	13,340,589	3,991,733	9,348,856	2,200,958	116,087	2,084,871	79,865,658	34,453,710	\$ 45,411,948

Notes:

1) Local Partnerships:

- a. Funding Sources: Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funds and General Funds
- b. Formula allocation cash advances are disbursed on a quarterly basis
- c. Expenditures reflect disbursements from SC First Steps (state-level)
- d. Includes local-level actual expenses to staff and vendors
- e. Contracted Accounting Firm, Accounting Software Network Support & Programmatic Data Housing
- f. OFS program & finance staff (payroll, rent, contractual, supplies, travel, etc.)

Federal Funds:		All Funds (Budgets)	
VISTA	50,000	E.I.A.	40,007,554
AmeriCorps:	427,523	General Funds	17,520,181
SLDS:	266,194	EIA Carry Over	6,796,376
PDG:	2,654,066	Federal Funds	13,340,589
ESSER Funds	9,942,806	Private Funds	2,200,958
Total	13,340,589	Total	79,865,658

Local Partnerships (Cont'd):

- g. External programmatic evaluation
 - h. Financial audits-annually each LP
 - i. Workers' compensation insurance coverage
 - j. Includes LP Countdown to Kindergarten program
- 2) Private budgets based on Private Grants, Projected Fund Raising, & prior year cash.**
- 3) State Appropriations Include EIA Funds & General Funds along with carry forward cash.**

Donations

FY 2024

As of December 31, 2023



DATE RECEIVED	GENERAL	DONOR/PAYOR	FUNDS	PURPOSE / COMMENTS
Jul 7, 2023	\$ 1,000	SC Head Start	Restricted	2023 Summit
Jul 24, 2023	\$ 2,500	DHEC	Restricted	2023 Summit
Aug 3, 2023	\$ 500	Lewis T. Smoak	Restricted	Night to Celebrate Communities
Aug 3, 2023	\$ 25	Gwen Cook	Restricted	Laurens County FS
Aug 3, 2023	\$ 25	Joe Nation	Restricted	Lexington County FS
Aug 3, 2023	\$ 25	Chevelle Gilyard	Restricted	Richland County FS
Aug 16, 2023	\$ 2,500	SC ETV	Restricted	2023 Summit
Aug 28, 2023	\$ 100	Judy and Walter Newman	Restricted	Sumter County FS
Aug 28, 2023	\$ 100	Shirnetha Belk	Restricted	Lancaster County FS-Honoring Lora Bryson
Aug 31, 2023	\$ 1,250	Sisters of Charity	Restricted	2023 Summit
Sep 1, 2023	\$ 2,500	John S. McBride Jr.	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Sep 1, 2023	\$ 50	Laura Baker	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Sep 5, 2023	\$ 1,000	Institute for Child Success	Restricted	2023 Summit
Sep 5, 2023	\$ 250	Peter A. Miller	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Sep 18, 2023	\$ 10,000	Morley Family Fund	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Oct 12, 2023	\$ 25	Hazel Bachman	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Oct 16, 2023	\$ 5,500	Kaplan	Restricted	\$2,500 NTCC, \$3,000 Summit
Oct 18, 2023	\$ 713	Expo Pass	Restricted	2023 Summit
Oct 20, 2023	\$ 25	Bob Reeder-NFG	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Oct 20, 2023	\$ 110	Betty Gardiner-NFG	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Oct 20, 2023	\$ 50	Erin Hall-NFG	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Oct 20, 2023	\$ 110	Elizabeth Dudek-NFG	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Oct 20, 2023	\$ 25	Rutledge long-NFG	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Oct 20, 2023	\$ 25	Joe Nation-NFG	Restricted	Lexington County FS
Oct 26, 2023	\$ 200	Cheryl and Dennis Wiese-NFG	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Oct 26, 2023	\$ 300	Karen Waller-NFG	Restricted	Chesterfield County FS
Oct 26, 2023	\$ 25	Joe Nation- NFG	Restricted	Lexington County FS
Nov 2, 2023	\$ 27	Susan Jones	Unrestricted	Horry County FS
Nov 6, 2023	\$ 27	Jim Riddle	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 6, 2023	\$ 2,500	Mia Flores (Lakeshore Learning)	Restricted	2023 Summit Sponsorship
Nov 8, 2023	\$ 75	Franklin Schools	Restricted	2023 Summit
Nov 17, 2023	\$ 20	Glenn Wright	Unrestricted	Lancaster County FS
Nov 21, 2023	\$ 1,000	Janice Kilburn	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 22, 2023	\$ 25	Joe Nation-NFG	Restricted	Lexington County FS
Nov 22, 2023	\$ 2,500	Blake Family Fund	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 120	Sue Williams	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 100	Deborah Robertson	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 50	Chelsea Richard	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 120	Christopher and Janie Neeley	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 120	Karen Oliver	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 27	Avian Jones	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 120	Marie Fadeley	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 50	Valencia Johnson	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 50	Christine McFadden	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS

Nov 30, 2023	\$ 150	Georgia Mjartan	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 100	Elizabeth Dudek	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 500	Barbara Manoski	Unrestricted	Spartanburg County FS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 25	Sarah Eargle	Unrestricted	Newberry County FS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 100	Michael Leach	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 50	Ben Gibson	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 27	Holly McGlothin	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 2,000	Tom Lacas	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 27	Mary Anne Matthews	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Nov 30, 2023	\$ 10	Lee Patterson	Unrestricted	Richland County FS
Dec 4, 2023	\$ 27	Myrelo King	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Dec 8, 2023	\$ 500	Kimberly-Clark Beech Island	Unrestricted	Aiken County FS
Dec 8, 2023	\$ 50	Antionette Alston	Unrestricted	Newberry County FS
Dec 15, 2023	\$ 1,000	Lourie Consulting	Restricted	Night to Celebrate Communities
Dec 15, 2023	\$ 2,500	Sunshine House	Restricted	Night to Celebrate Communities
Dec 18, 2023	\$ 27	Matthew Orzoco	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Dec 19, 2023	\$ 50	Mary Lee Author	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Dec 19, 2023	\$ 500	J. Gregory Hembree	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS
Dec 22, 2023	\$ 100	Sharon O'Bryant	Unrestricted	Donation to SCFS

Total \$ 43,607



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees

From: Senator Gerald Malloy

Date: February 15, 2024

RE: **Legislative Committee Report**

FY 2024-25 Budget – Updates

On January 16, 2023, Georgia Mjartan and Mark Barnes presented the First Steps state budget request to the House Ways and Means Public Education & Special Schools Subcommittee.

- Status: The Subcommittee is currently deliberating before their recommendations are submitted to the full House Ways and Means Committee.

The 2023-24 budget priorities are listed below.

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| • Unfunded Personnel Cost Increases (EIA) | \$362,089 |
| • Classification, Compensation & Capacity | \$304,824 |
| • Separation from Dept. of Education | \$279,724 |
| • First Steps Local Partnerships | \$4,769,076 |
| • Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) | \$242,272 |
| • Full Day 4K (CERDEP) | \$9,064,714 |

Proviso: 4K Updates

Proviso Deletion: SDE-First Steps Transfer Plan

Legislative Session – Updates

Preschool Suspension and Expulsion:

- The Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children (JCLCC) met on January 17th to receive testimony from a variety of speakers, including First Steps 4K State Director, Martha Strickland.
- First Steps staff is working closely with Committee staff as they draft a bill to address preschool suspension and expulsion in publicly funded preschool and pre-kindergarten programs.

Special Joint Committee to Study Child Care

- The Committee met on January 11th and February 8th to receive testimony from a variety of speakers, including the Department of Social Services on childcare licensing and multiple childcare providers on their experiences.

S. 905: Read to Succeed Act

- This bill includes comprehensive amendments to the Read to Succeed Act. Included are amendments to the endorsement requirements for pre-service and in-service teachers, references to the science of reading, and amendments related to readiness assessments administered to prekindergarten and kindergarten students.
- Status: In Senate Education Committee



Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT

The January meeting of the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee was held on Wednesday, January 24, 2024 via Zoom and was called to order at 11:04AM. Committee members present were myself and Janie Neeley. Staff members presented were Chelsea Richard, Georgia Mjartan, Karen Oliver, and Derek Cromwell. The meeting was opened with a recognition of the successful of this committee's new meeting structure that was introduced in mid-2023. This new structure includes bringing in staff/external partners to do more in depth presentations of evaluations and providing a space for more process-related discussions related to operationalizing the First Steps and ECAC strategic plans. These meetings are open to anyone who wants to attend, including staff and board members. Below is information related to the next two meetings:

Zoom meetings (Meeting ID: 873 0000 2784; Passcode: 064776)		
Date (Time)	Wednesday, March 27 (11AM-12PM)	Wednesday, May 22 (11AM-12PM)
Topic	Final results from child care scholarship external evaluation	Five-year evaluation plan
Presenter	USC's Institute for Families in Society	External evaluator (contract to be awarded soon)
Staff point of contact: Chelsea Richard (crichard@scfirststeps.org)		

Most of the meeting was spent giving an update on the 2023 Agency Rocks. Rocks were utilized to operationalize the 2020-2025 First Steps strategic plan, *Every Child Ready*, for calendar year 2023. Specifics on how rocks were integrated across the agency can be found in the meeting minutes.

The 2023 Agency Rocks were as follows:

1. Make First Steps and ECAC sustainable through legislation
2. Increase job satisfaction and provide cross-departmental trainings that improve efficiency and effectiveness of our teams
3. Launch all capabilities of First5SC and fully integrate it as a key tool internally and externally
4. Produce a feasible plan, which includes timelines and measures, to obtain diversified, long-term funding sources by April 2023
5. Increase the number of children enrolled in high intensity programs funded by First Steps
6. Implement and maintain internal systems for success

Overall, the 2023 Agency Rocks were a success, and a lot of the work will continue into 2024. The attached document includes details of each rock. Staff will share a high-level overview of the 2023 accomplishments and 2024 ongoing work with the full board. The meeting was adjourned at 11:57AM.



Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Meeting Wednesday, January 24, 2024 11AM-12PM via Zoom

Committee members present: Dr. Amy Williams, Janie Neeley
Staff present: Dr. Chelsea Richard, Georgia Mjartan, Karen Oliver, Derek Cromwell

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 11:04AM. The meeting was opened with a recognition of the successful of this committee's new meeting structure that was introduced in mid-2023. This new structure includes bringing in staff/external partners to do more in depth presentations of evaluations and providing a space for more process-related discussions related to operationalizing the First Steps and ECAC strategic plans. These meetings are open to anyone who wants to attend, including staff and board members, so plans for upcoming meetings will be shared at each board meeting in the Chairwoman's Report.

Most of the meeting was spent giving an update on the 2023 Agency Rocks. Rocks were utilized to operationalize the 2020-2025 First Steps strategic plan, *Every Child Ready*, for calendar year 2023, which was responsive to the team's desire to have clarity around what the annual priorities are. Every team member was a part of at least one rock team (formalized through the annual Employee Performance Management System). Rock teams were responsible for deciding how they were going to operate. All rocks were tied to strategies from the First Steps' 2020-2025 strategic plan, *Every Child Ready*, and some rocks had numerical goals from the Agency Accountability Report (on a fiscal year calendar) tied to them.

The 2023 Agency Rocks were as follows:

1. Make First Steps and ECAC sustainable through legislation
2. Increase job satisfaction and provide cross-departmental trainings that improve efficiency and effectiveness of our teams
3. Launch all capabilities of First5SC and fully integrate it as a key tool internally and externally
4. Produce a feasible plan, which includes timelines and measures, to obtain diversified, long-term funding sources by April 2023
5. Increase the number of children enrolled in high intensity programs funded by First Steps
6. Implement and maintain internal systems for success

Overall, the 2023 Agency Rocks were a success, and a lot of the work will continue into 2024. The attached document includes details of each rock. After a high-level presentation of what is contained in this document, the committee shared that they appreciated this level of clarity of what the team accomplished over the year and how success is being measured internally – quantitatively and qualitatively.

Other updates were provided related to the Birth through Five Plan progress report and the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS). Calendar year 2024 will be a busy year for the ECAC, as the governing body of the ECIDS, to finalize the initial data governance infrastructure. The meeting was adjourned at 11:57AM.

2023 Rocks: Progress Update

Report date: January 23, 2024



Rock 1: Make First Steps and ECAC sustainable through legislation

- Leads: Kaitlyn Richards (Government Affairs Liaison); Georgia Mjartan (Executive Director)
- Associated strategies from *Every Child Ready*
 - 3.1.1: Increase public support for investments in early childhood by raising awareness about the need and promoting the value, long-term benefits, and return on investment of optimal early development and school readiness.
 - 3.1.2: Increase public awareness of and support for South Carolina First Steps.
 - 3.1.3: Develop and implement targeted strategies to educate and inform legislators and policymakers about the need for early childhood investment, the efficacy of First Steps programs, and the opportunity for measurable impact with the allocation of additional state funds.
 - 4.1.1: Develop, fund, and fully-utilize the Early Childhood Advisory Council, a statutorily mandated initiative of South Carolina First Steps, as a shared, cross-agency governance mechanism for state-level leadership and decision-making related to early childhood policies, systems, and practices.
 - 4.1.2: By strengthening the Early Childhood Advisory Council and better communicating its role, position it to be a trusted source of advice for policymakers including the Governor and legislators.
- 2023 Accomplishments
 - H.4023 passed in June 2023 (Act 81), included
 - Permanent authorization for First Steps
 - Update of ECAC duties and membership
 - FY23-24 State Appropriations Act included significant, recurring funding for the ECAC as well as funding for other areas of First Steps
- 2024 Ongoing Work:
 - Implementation of Act 81
 - FY24-25 budget request submitted includes significant requests for all areas of First Steps and the ECAC

Rock 2: Increase job satisfaction and provide cross-departmental trainings that improve efficiency and effectiveness of our teams

- Lead: Avian Jones (HR Coordinator)
- Associated strategies from *Every Child Ready*
 - 1.1.7: Cultivate a community of champions and advocates for children and their families.
 - 2.2.4: Promote inclusivity, equity, cultural and linguistic competence, and accessibility as valued attributes in hiring, contracting, program guidelines, policies and procedures.
 - 2.4.2: Establish a workplace that is family-friendly, inclusive, and supportive of continuous learning, growth, and development at all levels including through the development of relevant policies and practices.
 - 2.4.3: Encourage information-sharing and interactions among state office staff, local partnerships, 4K providers, board members, and others in the early childhood field to ensure the greatest opportunity for innovation and creativity.
 - 4.6.3: Support staff in pursuing fellowships, publishing their work, and highlighting accomplishments.
- 2023 Accomplishments
 - Classification and compensation study with state Office of HR
 - Microsoft Teams training sessions for all staff
 - All Team retreat occurred in October 2023

2023 Rocks: Progress Update

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- Redesign of all team meeting schedule
- 2024 Ongoing Work
 - Reviewing the onboarding process and providing feedback to improve the experience
 - Continuing to work through the results of the 2023 all-team survey

Rock 3: Launch all capabilities of First5SC and fully integrate it as a key tool internally and externally

- Leads: Karen Oliver (ECAC Program Manager); Beth Moore (Director of Communications)
- FY23 goal (1.3.3): Increase leads generated from First5SC to at least 2,109 (a 5% increase over FY22)
- Associated strategies from *Every Child Ready*
 - 2.3.3: Provide families with easy-to-find, accessible information about available early childhood program options in their community.
 - 4.2.3: Develop, maintain and promote First Five SC as an early childhood system outreach tool and single portal into publicly- funded early childhood programs and services for South Carolina’s children prenatal through age five and their families across the domains of child care and early education, health and safety, special needs and early intervention, food and nutrition, and parenting and family support.
- 2023 Accomplishments
 - Goal met! FY23 goal (1.3.3): 10,023 leads generated from First5SC (+399% over FY22)
 - First 5 for All launched: 14 states/municipalities and Voices for Healthy Children have had at least one demo meeting since January. Launched Toolkit, which has been accessed by representatives from 31 states to date. Production of animated explainer video completed. Presentations at Aspen Ascend, BUILD, PAT National, Nurturing Developing Minds. 6 webinars and 1 podcast.
 - Local outreach continues: Presented, tabled or provided inserts at 12 conferences reaching 6800+ people. Training for providers offered two times in last quarter of calendar year and again in 2024 underway.
 - Established cohort of seven school districts to participate in portal
 - Pilot promotional strategy underway: Partnering with 5 organizations to distribute information about First Five in Newborn Supply Kits.
- 2024 Ongoing Work
 - FY24 goals
 - 1.3.3: 6,300 leads will be generated from First5SC (500/month*12 months * +5%)
 - 1.3.4: Receive 1,800 applications through FirstFiveSC common application portal (150/month*12 months)
 - First 5 for All continuing
 - Newborn Supply Kit initiative will wind down
 - Local engagement will include more training for providers, outreach through conferences and engaging two additional cohorts of school districts and Head Starts

Rock 4: Produce a feasible plan, which includes timelines and measures, to obtain diversified, long-term funding sources by April 2023

- Lead: Betty Gardiner (Director of Grantmaking and Development)
- Associated strategies from *Every Child Ready*
 - 3.2.3: Develop a funding strategy for the expansion of First Steps programs and services through fee-for-service mechanisms including those funded by federal sources (i.e. Medicaid, IV-E).

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- 3.4.2: Ensure the fiscal health of First Steps through strong fiscal oversight, accurate budgeting, inclusive planning and accountability to funders including the General Assembly and taxpayers.
- 3.4.3: Explore and pursue ways to fully utilize the value of First Steps' unique public-private partnership model, learning from other organizations and sharing best-practices nationally.
- 2023 Accomplishments
 - Determined Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) funding amounts committed for the next 2-3 years
 - Submitted Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Planning supplemental funding request to extend staff and PDG vendor funding
 - Created an Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) spend-down plan
 - Continued Community Pathway work with SC Department of Social Services scheduled to pilot first of 2024 for 50% reimbursement on non-federal PAT expenditures
 - Partnership with SCDHEC and SCDSS to sustain ESSER-funded HealthySteps sites for an additional 2 years (FY25, FY26)
- 2024 Ongoing Work:
 - Implement plan to sustain local partnership's successful ESSER-funded programs for FY25
 - Establish work group to plan for PDG 3-year request
 - Implement Connected Families sustainability plan with the SC Department of Social Services

Rock 5: Increase the number of children enrolled in high intensity programs funded by First Steps

- Leads: Martha Strickland (State 4K Director); Derek Cromwell (Chief Partnership Officer)
 - FY23 Goal (1.2.2): 6% of children in need will be directly served by First Steps high intensity programs.
 - Fully expanding 4K statewide, serving 6,045 students with at least one program in each county (FY22 = 3,343)
 - Reaching at least 2,778 children zero through five in local partnership high intensity programs (FY22 = 4,513)
 - Other associated FY23 measures & goals
 - 1.1.1: Across high-intensity parenting programs, 50% of families will show improvement in parent-child interaction. (no FY22 measure)
 - 1.2.1: 20% of children in need will be directly served by First Steps. (FY22 = 37%)
 - 2.1.1: On Day 45 of the school year, 60% of licensed, approved 4K slots will be filled.
 - 2.1.2: 6,045 students will be served in First Steps 4K (served for at least one day through day 180). (FY22 = 3,343)
 - 2.1.3: 388 classrooms will provide First Steps 4K. (FY22 = 278)
- Associated strategies from *Every Child Ready*
 - 1.1.1: 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.
 - 1.1.2: Ensure access to parenting programs, offered at no charge, in every county in South Carolina.
 - 1.1.3: Increase the number of families participating in evidence-based and evidence-

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- informed parenting programs.
- 1.2.1: 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.
- 1.2.3: Increase the availability of early care and education programs that align with families' geographic and transportation needs and enable parents to work including: preserving the availability of state-funded 4K schedule options: traditional school day & school year, extended school day, extended school day & school year, and summer; supporting child care providers offering evening, weekend, and non-traditional schedule options; and intentionally including Family Child Care Home providers, Family, Friend and Neighbor, and non-licensed caregivers in child care training, quality enhancement and professional development opportunities.
- 1.3.1: Support and expand the reach of programs that have a measurable impact on the health and safety of children, including programs that support healthy, safe and attached families.
- 2023 Accomplishments
 - Goal exceeded! 8% of children in need were directly served by First Steps high intensity programs in FY23 (11,548 total children).
 - 4K served 3,650 children through day 180 of the 2022-23 school year (+9.2% over FY22).
 - Local partnerships served 7,996 children directly in high intensity programs in FY23 (+77.2% over FY22).
 - Note: LP served directly + 4K served directly does not equal total served directly because 90% of HIPYPY families are also First Steps 4K students (removed 98 children from total directly served as to not double count)
 - 4K identified another goal = To lift center slots to full expansion of First Steps 4K, the Team will utilize strategies to open 20% more slots in the core needed groups. (FY22= 249 sites with 279 classrooms)
 - As of Aug. 14, 2023, First Steps 4K added 51 programs and 68 new classrooms. That is a gain of 20% in the number of providers and 24% in the number of classrooms. Recruitment strategy was to target the following categories of core slots (data as of October 4, 2023):
 - Special groups- SCISA, Catholic Schools, Chains, ABC sites emphasizing A+ and A sites, Charter schools → We added 3 SCISA schools, 2 Catholic Schools, 4 chains, 1 A+ site, and 2 Charter Schools.
 - Priority counties with a low number of slots vs. high need- Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Chester, Dorchester, Greenville, Lancaster, Lexington, Richland, and York → We added 2 in Beaufort, 1 in Berkeley, 2 in Charleston, 2 in Dorchester, 6 in Greenville, 1 in Lancaster, 2 in Lexington, 7 in Richland, and 2 in York.
 - Current partners with full classrooms in areas of high 4K eligible numbers → We added 13 new classrooms with current providers.
 - Local partnership high intensity program reach increase due to increased investment in these programs
 - Introduction of Healthy Steps and Family Connects in FY23
 - Expansion of parenting programs via Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) grants

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- Together, the 4K and local partnership teams came together to align themselves within the state regions that bring together the 4K coaches, 4K data team members, and the local partnership program officers quarterly.
- Together, 4K and local partnership teams identified potential 4K providers in the current counties without one (Abbeville, Allendale, Calhoun, Edgefield, Fairfield, and McCormick). This is a work in progress.
- 2024 Ongoing Work
 - FY24 goals
 - 1.2.2: 8,541 children will be directly served by First Steps high intensity programs.
 - 4,015 through First Steps 4K
 - 4,526 through First Steps local partnerships
 - 2.1.1: On Day 45 of the school year, 60% of licensed, approved 4K slots will be filled. (Goal exceeded! 65%)
 - 2.1.2: Increase student enrollment within the First Steps 4K program to 4,015 for 2023-24 school year.
 - 2.1.3: 257 classrooms will offer First Steps 4K.
 - 2.1.5: 85% of students enrolled on day 45 will still be enrolled on day 135.
 - Team is continuing to meet quarterly to align efforts and stay abreast of ongoing initiatives and potential for collaboration

Rock 6: Implement and maintain internal systems for success

- Leads: Mark Barnes (Director of Administration); Chelsea Richard (Director of Research and Strategy)
- Associated strategies from *Every Child Ready*
 - 1.4.6: Enhance data sharing and integration across early childhood programs and within First Steps programs to address data gaps, ensure better measurement of early childhood outcomes, and transfer data during child transitions such as from pre-k to kindergarten.
 - 3.4.2: Ensure the fiscal health of First Steps through strong fiscal oversight, accurate budgeting, inclusive planning and accountability to funders including the General Assembly and taxpayers.
- 2023 Accomplishments
 - Continued development of new case and program management system, the Knowledge, Information, and Teaming System (KITS)
 - Began implementation of Raiser's Edge at the State Office
 - Implemented time keeping system at the State Office for grants documentation, where it is required by the funder
 - Developed and implemented a safety plan for the agency
 - Developed and implemented the plan for training staff and making Microsoft's Office 365 Suite available for the agency
 - Identified needs and explored solutions for grants and procurement management, included grants management in the Financial Management System RFP for the Local Partnerships.
- 2024 Ongoing Work
 - Purchase and implement an event management system for the agency
 - Complete Request for Proposal process with State Procurement for one solution that includes management of grants, LP finance, constituent relationships, and LP HR



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees

From: Georgia Mjartan

Date: February 15, 2024

RE: **Executive Director's Report**

I. Act 81 Implementation Progress

Local Partnership Executive Director Hiring, Salary, and Evaluations:

- First Steps has engaged an external consultant, Mary Dell Hayes, to facilitate the development of a process for reviewing local partnership submissions.
- Two optional input sessions were held for the SC First Steps Board of Trustees to share thoughts and suggestions. Thanks to the 12 members who attended and actively participated. Five additional sessions are scheduled for local partnership board members to also share their thoughts and suggestions.

Local Partnership Board Structure:

- This February, all members of the SC General Assembly will receive a letter requesting that their delegation make appointments to the local boards, outlining the new requirements, and indicating how many appointments have been made and how many are remaining.
- Local partnerships have begun receiving appointments from their respective legislative delegations, school boards, and county councils.
- All delegations have received the recommendations for appointment of a representative from DSS and DHEC.
- Local Head Start grantees are responsible for providing recommendations to county delegations, and at this time, some but not all have provided recommendations.
- Template letters have been provided to all partnerships to assist in their outreach to these bodies.

II. Separation from SC Department of Education – Status Update

- Presented SC First Steps budget request to House Ways and Means K-12 Education Subcommittee which included request for recurring funds to cover costs associated with separation.
- Submitted a request for a new budget structure in the state budget separating SC First Steps from the State Department of Education. Proposal submitted to Executive Budget Office, House Ways and Means Committee, and Senate Finance Committee. Executive Budget Office approved this proposal.
- Have continued meeting with Department of Administration and Shared Services.

III. Local Partnerships

- Berkeley County First Steps
 - o Adrienne Troy-Frazier's last day is Feb. 15
 - o An Interim Executive Director will be named



- Chester County First Steps
 - o Board has contracted with York County First Steps to handle all administrative and oversight functions for the remainder of FY2024
- Spartanburg County First Steps
 - o Barbara Manoski's last day is April 1
 - o Caroline Goins will begin as Executive Director on April 1

IV. First Steps 4K

2023-2024 School Year (Day 90 of the 2023-2024 school year was January 16, 2024.)

- o **Enrollment**
 - 3,933 students enrolled for at least one day on Day 90 (13% increase in number of students enrolled for at least one day through Day 90 of the 2022-2023 school year)
 - 3,527 students enrolled point-in-time on Day 90 (11% increase in the number of students enrolled on Day 90 of the 2022-2023 school year)
- o **Student Applications**
 - 5,837 student applications received through Day 90 (14% increase in the number of student applications received through Day 90 of the 2022-2023 school year)
- o **Providers**
 - 280 total providers approved to date (12% increase in the number of providers approved through Day 90 of the 2022-2023 school year) with 348 classrooms (16% increase in the number of classrooms approved through Day 90 of the 2022-2023 school year)
 - 335 active classrooms (19% increase in the number of active classrooms through Day 90 of the 2022-2023 school year)
 - 233 providers (83% of approved providers) participate in ABC Quality (9% increase in the number of providers that participate in ABC Quality through Day 90 of the 2022-2023 school year)

2024-2025 School Year

- o **Student Applications**
 - 144 student applications were received on the day of application launch (January 16, 2024; 206% increase in the number of applications received on the first day of application launch for the 2023-2024 school year [January 17, 2023])
 - 54 applications were received between January 12 and January 15, 2024
 - o The 2024-2025 student application launched on Friday, January 12, 2024; however, the advertised launch date remained January 16, 2024
- o **New Provider Interest Sessions** (data as of January 24, 2024)
 - There were 7 New Provider Interest Sessions held between 10/11/23 and 1/17/24 for the 2024-2025 school year
 - 95 providers registered to attend a New Provider Interest Session for the 24-25 school year, 80 attended, and 24 submitted an application



V. MLK Week of Service

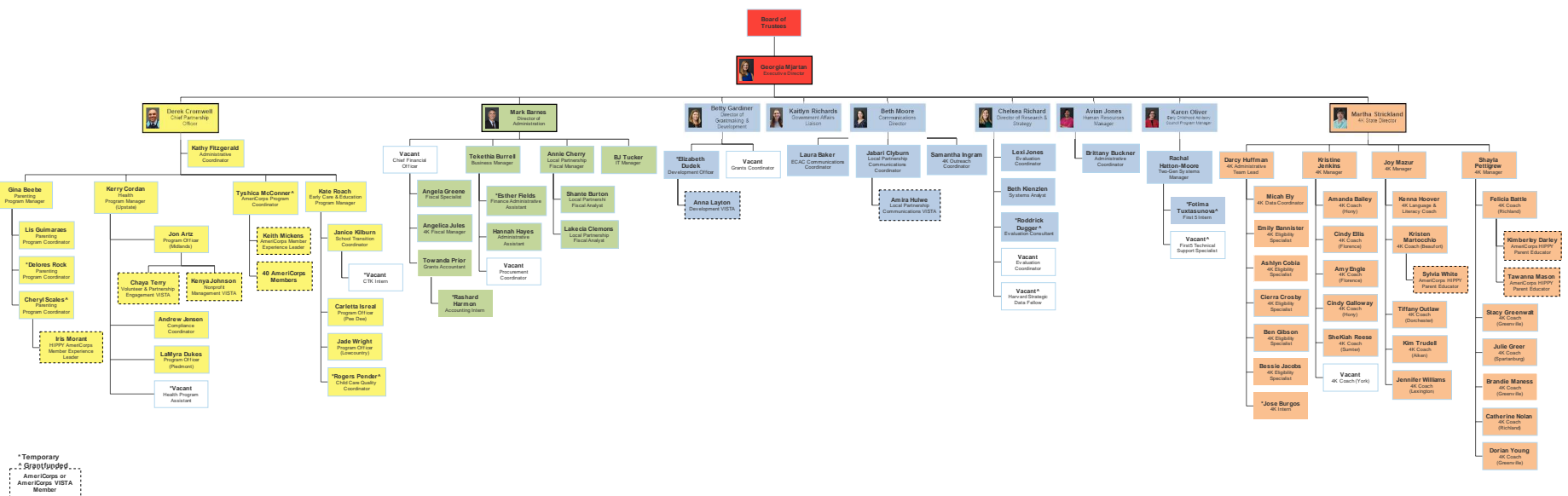
- 3rd year of statewide volunteer engagement initiative led by SC First Steps AmeriCorps and VISTA members during the week of Martin Luther King Day
- 170 volunteers including board members, donors, elected leaders, and national service members read to 230 First Steps 4K classrooms.
- 4000 new, hardback books were distributed thanks to the generosity of donors including Marine Toys for Tots Foundation and PaperPie.

VI. Night to Celebrate Community

- March 21, 2024, 6 pm – 10 pm, Hall at Senate’s End, Columbia, SC
- To date raised / committed \$100,500
- Goal \$120,000
- Tickets on sale now (\$100 or couples ticket for \$185)

VII. HR Updates

- Classification and compensation study implementation and new organizational chart roll out on February 2, 2024 (new org chart is included in packet)
- SC First Steps welcomes the following new staff members:
 - o Esther Fields, Finance Administrative Assistant
 - o Catherine Nolan, 4K Coach (Richland County)
 - o Anji Greene, Fiscal Specialist
- Currently, the organization has the following vacancies:
 - o Chief Financial Officer
 - o Procurement Coordinator
 - o 4K Coach (York County)
 - o Grants Coordinator
 - o Evaluation Coordinator
 - o First 5 SC Technical Support Specialist
 - o Harvard Strategic Data Fellow (2 year, FT)
 - o Health Program Assistant (PT)
 - o Countdown to Kindergarten Intern (PT)



*Temporary
 - Support Staff
 - Americorps or
 - Americorps VISTA
 Member