



Meeting of the Board of Trustees
December 6, 2023 2:00PM
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** (Dave Morley)
Motion: To adopt the agenda as submitted
Motion: To adopt the October 19, 2023 minutes as submitted
Attachments: SC First Steps Board of Trustees October 19, 2023 Minutes
- IV. **Executive Committee** (David Morley)
Motion: To approve the 2024 SC First Steps Board of Trustees and Early Childhood Advisory Council meeting dates.
Attachments: SC First Steps Board of Trustees and Early Childhood Advisory Council 2024 Meeting Schedule
- V. **State Ethics Training** (Meghan Walker)
- VI. **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)
- VII. **Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee** (Dr. Chelsea Richard)
Attachments: Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Report, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Minutes
- VIII. **Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee** (Wes Wooten)
Attachments: Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee Report, Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee Minutes
- IX. **Finance and Administration Committee** (Mark Barnes)
Attachments: Finance and Administration Committee Report, Finance and Administration Committee Meeting Minutes, FY2023 Financial Status Report as of October 31, 2023,



FY2023 Donations Report as of October 31, 2023, 2024 Finance and Administration Committee Timeline and Key Dates

- X. **Legislative Committee** (Sen. Greg Hembree)
- XI. **Acknowledgments** (Dave Morley)
- XII. **Executive Director's Report** (Georgia Mjartan)
Attachments: Executive Director's Report – Year In Review, First Steps 4K Day 45, First Steps 4K Achievement Data, Countdown to Kindergarten Summer 2023
- XIII. **Motion:** To adjourn the meeting of the SC First Steps Board of Trustees



Board of Trustees Meeting
October 19, 2023 2:00PM
SC First Steps
636 Rosewood Drive Columbia, SC 29201
Minutes

Trustees Present (18):

Rep. Terry Alexander
Dr. Robert Bank
Jacque Curtin
Mary Lynne Diggs
Matthew Ferguson
John Hayes
Sen. Greg Hembree
Constance Holloway
Michael Leach

Jesica Mackey
Jack McBride
Dave Morley, Chairman
Janie Neeley
Roger Pryor
Mary Anne Scott
Dr. Edward Simmer
Dr. Amy Williams
Wes Wooten

Trustees Absent (5)

Rep. Shannon Erickson
Robert Kerr
Sen. Gerald Malloy
Dr. Brenda Williams
Sue Williams

Attendees (63)

Georgia Mjartan
Avian Jones
Amber Gillum
Chelsea Richard
David Lisk
Derek Cromwell
Dorothy Priester
Ellen Andrews-Morgan
Elizabeth Dudek
Jackson Wilkins
Kaitlyn Richards
Karen Oliver
Kathy Fitzgerald
Mark Barnes
Martha Strickland
Myrelo King
Valencia Johnson
Adriana Rush
Althea Clyburn
Amanda Bailey
Amy Engle
Betty Gardiner
Brandie Maness
Candi Lalonde
Chastine Dickey-Jackson
Cheryl Scales

Cindy Ellis
Cindy Galloway
Denise Savidge
Felicia Battle
Gwendolyn Ross
Kim Chariker
Jabari Clyburn
Jade Wright
Jennifer Williams
Jon Artz
Joy Mazur
Julie Greer
Kenna Hoover
Kerry Cordan
Kim Trudell
Kristin Zeaser-Sydow
Kristine Jenkins
LaMyra Sanders
Leah Crosby
Lis Guimaraes
Lavinia Tejada
Marcia Nash
Mary Bailey
Melissa Johnson
Roddrick Dugger
Ryan Shinn

Salandra Bowman
Sally McClellan
Samantha Ingram
Sarah Crawford
Shalya Pettigrew
Sheila Cornwell
Silvia Landrum
Stacy Greenwalt
Tiffany Outlaw
Tricia Gordon
Virginia Ravenel



Mr. Morley called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. He requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Rep. Alexander provided the motion. Ms. Mackey provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the August 17, 2023 minutes. Ms. Mackey provided the motion. Ms. Neeley provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Valencia Johnson, Volunteer and Service-Learning Manager, presented on the contributions and benefits of AmeriCorps members within the communities that they serve.

Mr. Morley reported on the Executive Committee. He discussed the hiring and salary recommendations for Laurens County First Steps and Calhoun County First Steps.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the following consent agenda. Mr. McBride provided the motion. Dr. A. Williams provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Consent Agenda: Motions Recommended by Committees (Dave Morley)

- a. **Motion:** To approve the recommendation to increase the salary of the Laurens County First Steps Executive Director as proposed by the local partnership. (Executive Committee recommends)
- b. **Motion:** To approve the proposed Calhoun County First Steps Executive Director candidate and salary as submitted by the local partnership. (Executive Committee recommends)
- c. **Motion:** To receive the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year Financial Audit. (Finance and Administration Committee recommends)

Rep. Alexander made a motion to enter into executive session for discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements: to discuss the local partnership board's request to hire and establish the salary for the Lancaster County First Steps Executive Director candidate. The motion was seconded by Mr. McBride and unanimously approved. Rep. Alexander made a motion to exit executive session, seconded by Ms. Mackey, and unanimously approved. Mr. Pryor made a motion to approve the proposed Lancaster County First Steps Executive Director candidate and salary, as submitted by the local partnership board. The motion was seconded by Dr. Williams and unanimously approved.

Emily Sobczak, CPA with Green Finney, LLP provided a financial audit presentation for FY23.

Dr. A. Williams reported on the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee.

Mr. Cromwell shared that the Local Partnerships Programs and Grants Committee is normally scheduled to meet in early October to go over the financial results for the grant year. Due to extenuating circumstances the financial books weren't closed until recently and the committee will meet at a later time. Mr. Morley acknowledged that two counties that were on corrective action had a change in leadership with their executive directors which ended up being a positive change and they were able to receive funding.

Ms. Mackey reported on the Finance and Administration Committee.



Sen. Hembree provided an update on the agency head salary request that was submitted to the agency head salary commission for the executive director. The commission will be reviewing the bands and salaries in Spring '24 and the request will be carried over until the review is completed.

Ms. Mjartan gave the Executive Director's report where she went over the agency's fundraising efforts. She discussed the implementation process for Act 81 for the local partnership boards, their executive director hiring and salary interim process, and the process for the partnerships to move to PEBA. Ms. Mjartan went over the FY24-25 budget priorities. She provided First Steps 4K Day 35 data comparisons and gave an update on First Steps AmeriCorps recruitment. She went over the 2023 staff survey findings, and concluded with the introduction of new staff members and current vacancies.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rep. Alexander provided the motion. Mr. Pryor seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:36 p.m. by Mr. Morley.



2024

Board of Trustees and Early Childhood Advisory Council

Meeting Dates

Meetings will be held at 2 p.m. at the SC First Steps Office 636 Rosewood Drive Columbia, SC 29201

FEBRUARY 15, 2024	BOARD OF TRUSTEES EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL
APRIL 18, 2024	BOARD OF TRUSTEES EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL
JUNE 20, 2024	BOARD OF TRUSTEES EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL (Virtual)
AUGUST 15, 2024	BOARD OF TRUSTEES EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 17, 2024	BOARD OF TRUSTEES EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL
DECEMBER 4, 2024	BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNUAL MEETING EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL
DECEMBER 5, 2024	2024 SC SUMMIT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD



Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Meeting Monday, November 27, 2023 2-3PM via Zoom

Committee members present: Dave Morley, Janie Neeley, Dr. Brenda Williams
Staff present: Dr. Chelsea Richard, Martha Strickland, Joy Mazur, Georgia Mjartan, Lexi Jones

REPORT

The meeting was called to order at 2:03PM. Highlighting two First Steps 4K pilots funded through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) III was the focus of the meeting. ESSER III are federal COVID relief dollars provided to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) from the United States Department of Education. SCDE provided \$14.7 million in funding to First Steps over three years (September 2021 through September 2024) for a range of initiatives, including the two highlighted, successful First Steps 4K pilots: (1) teacher recruitment and retention stipends; (2) language and literacy boost.

State Director of First Steps 4K, Martha Strickland, presented about the success of the teacher recruitment and retention stipend initiative. The stipends intend to not only help providers recruit new teachers but also retain them in the same classroom for multiple years. The stipend payment amounts are based on years of experience in a First Steps 4K classroom and are distributed each semester after a rigorous verification process. The 2021-22 school year was the first year the stipends were implemented, and for the first two years, only lead teachers were eligible. 44% (159/366) of teachers received all stipends they were eligible for over the first two years of the initiative (details included in meeting minutes). In school year 2023-24, not only did the stipend payments increase, but also both lead teachers and instructional assistants are eligible.

Next, Joy Mazur, 4K Manager, presented about the successful language and literacy boost initiative, which is intended to “promote intentional teaching practices that develop and encourage high quality language and literacy environments and instruction in First Steps 4K classrooms”. This initiative, which began in February 2022, is operationalized via a combination of intensive professional development, parent engagement events, classroom environment changes, and materials. Participating classrooms receive up to \$11,000 in funding, and to date, over 3,900 First Steps 4K students have been reached by the language and literacy boost initiative (details included in meeting minutes), and most classrooms have participated all three years. The initiative’s success is measured at both classroom (via the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Tool) and student (via GOLD® by TeachingStrategies) levels. There was improvement seen across all focus ELLCO items, on average, between March 2022 and April 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 3:02PM.

**Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Meeting
Monday, November 27, 2023 2-3PM via Zoom**

Committee members present: Dave Morley, Janie Neeley, Dr. Brenda Williams
Staff present: Dr. Chelsea Richard, Martha Strickland, Joy Mazur, Georgia Mjartan, Lexi Jones

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 2:03PM. Highlighting two First Steps 4K pilots funded through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) III was the focus of the meeting. ESSER III are federal COVID relief dollars provided to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) from the United States Department of Education. SCDE provided \$14.7 million in funding to First Steps over three years (September 2021 through September 2024) for a range of initiatives, including the two highlighted, successful First Steps 4K pilots: (1) teacher recruitment and retention stipends; (2) language and literacy boost.

State Director of First Steps 4K, Martha Strickland, presented about the success of the teacher recruitment and retention stipend initiative. “When the classroom door closes,” Director Strickland said, “we know it’s the teacher that makes the difference.” The stipends intend to not only help providers recruit new teachers but also retain them in the same classroom for multiple years. The stipend payment amounts are based on years of experience in a First Steps 4K classroom and are distributed each semester after a rigorous verification process. The 2021-22 school year was the first year the stipends were implemented, and for the first two years, only lead teachers were eligible. 44% (159/366) of teachers received all stipends they were eligible for over the first two years of the initiative (see table 1 for more details).

Table 1. Definition of success for the same individual teacher for 4K teacher recruitment and retention stipends.

	4K Provider in Both Years		Provider in First Year Only		New Provider in Second Year Only
	231 centers 334 teachers		15 centers 15 teachers		16 centers 17 teachers
Semester 1	Recruit	Retain	Recruit	Retain	-
Semester 2	Retain	Retain	Retain	Retain	-
Semester 3	Retain	Retain	-	-	Recruit
Semester 4	Retain	Retain	-	-	Retain
Centers	42	90	3	4	12
Teachers	42	98	3	4	12

Semesters 1 and 2 in SY21-22; semesters 3 and 4 in SY22-23.

In school year 2023-24, not only did the stipend payments increase, but also both lead teachers and instructional assistants are eligible.

Next, Joy Mazur, 4K Manager, presented about the successful language and literacy boost initiative, which is intended to “promote intentional teaching practices that develop and encourage high quality language and literacy environments and instruction in First Steps 4K classrooms”. This initiative, which began in February 2022, is operationalized via a combination of intensive professional development, parent engagement events, classroom environment changes, and materials.

Participating classrooms receive up to \$11,000 in funding, which is utilized for teacher compensation (>45%), materials (37%), and other (<18%). To date, over 3,900 First Steps 4K students have been reached by the language and literacy boost initiative (see table 2 for year-to-year details), and most classrooms have participated all three years.

Table 2. Language and Literacy Boost Reach Since Inception			
Initiative Year	Year 1: partial (Feb – Jul 2022)	Year 2: full (Aug 2022 – Jul 2023)	Year 3: in progress (Aug 2023 – Jul 2024)
Counties	28	27	28
Providers	74	76	82
Classrooms	81	87	101
Students	968	1,369	1,660
Family engagement events	250+	428	85 (Aug – Oct)
Individuals who participated in events	-	6,273	3,072

The initiative’s success is measured at both classroom (via the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Tool) and student (via GOLD® by TeachingStrategies) levels. ELLCO assessments are done multiple times to measure growth in environments that promote and enhance language and literacy skills. ELLCO items are scored on a scale of 1 (deficient) to 5 (exemplary)). The state team uses ELLCO scores to inform their professional development foci each month. For example, in early 2022, the ELLCO item related to phonological awareness was the lowest (2.37), on average, across all participating classrooms, so the team focused on teaching teachers how to embed phonological awareness organically in and outside the classroom. There was improvement seen across all focus ELLCO items, on average, between March 2022 and April 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 3:02PM.



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees

From: Roger Pryor

Date: November 16th, 2023

RE: Local Partnerships Program and Grants Committee

The Local Partnerships Program and Grants Committee met on Thursday, November 16th, 2023. Minutes of the meeting are attached. The following motion was approved unanimously.

A. READY Grant- ECI - Early Childhood Innovation Grant

Betty explained what the READY grant was for and the process that was used to get to the four counties that were recommended by the external review committee. She provided details on what the Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation (CC4ECI), what the cohort model would look like and how this initiative allowed SC First Steps to provide innovative ways to meet unmet community needs. Funding will be up to \$100,000 per year, for at two years for each grantee awarded. Four (4) partnerships ultimately applied for funding- Lee County, Pickens County, Richland County, and York County

Motion

The Local Partnerships Program and Grants Committee approves the award of Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation grants to four (4) Local Partnerships as selected by the SCFS State Office external review committee, Lee County, Pickens County, Richland County, and York County. The motion was brought by Jack McBride, seconded by John Hayes, and was unanimously approved for the consent agenda.

B. Chief Partnership Officer Updates

Derek explained to the committee that in the January 2024 committee meeting we will be bringing forward many revisions and updates to the Program and Operational Guidelines for the FY25 grant year. The updates are occurring to bring up to date our guidelines to consider the effects of Act 81, to align program and operational guidelines with the new First Steps data collection system (KITS) estimated to come online in grant year 25, and the transition to a 3-year formula grant cycle also for implementation for grant year 25.

C. Adjourn

Meeting was called to adjourn at 1:40 p.m. by Roger Pryor.



Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee Meeting

November 16th, 2023

Virtual

1:00 p.m.- 2:30 p.m.

Minutes

Attendance

Committee: Roger Pryor, John Hayes, Wes Wooten, Jack McBride

SCFS Staff: Derek Cromwell, Betty Gardiner, Chelsea Richard, Gina Beebe, Janice Kilburn, Cheryl Scales-Chavis, Kerry Cordan, LaMyra Sanders Dukes, Jade Wright, Kate Roach, Jon Artz, Carletta Isreal, Kathy Fitzgerald, Kenya Johnson.

1. **Open** – Roger Pryor was acting chair and opened the meeting up at 1:02 p.m. Roger announced the committee had a quorum. Committee moved to first moved into the first agenda item.
2. **Action Item: READY Grant- ECI - Early Childhood Innovation Grant (see attached)**

The floor was turned over to Betty Gardiner. Betty explained what the READY grant was for and the process that was used to get to the four counties that were recommended by the external review committee.

- a. South Carolina First Steps has developed a grantmaking initiative using state READY (Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth) funding that fills an unmet need of local partnerships: resources to implement, test, and support innovation in order to make needed services more accessible and effective for underserved children and families. The Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation (CC4ECI) will use a cohort learning community model to test what works, using evaluation processes that are focused on learning and improving and not just compliance.
- b. Funding will be up to \$100,000 per year, for at two years.
- c. Ten (10) partnerships submitted letters of intent to apply for funding. Of those ten (10), seven (7) were invited to complete a full application.
- d. Four (4) partnerships ultimately applied for funding- Lee County, Pickens County, Richland County, and York County

After explanation was completed, Roger asked Derek to read the motion.

Motion:

The Local Partnerships Program and Grants Committee approves the award of Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation grants to four (4) Local Partnerships as selected by the SCFS State



Office external review Committee, Lee County, Pickens County, Richland County, and York County.

Motion: Jack McBride

Second: John Hayes

Vote: All said yes

3. Chief Partnership Officer Update- Derek Cromwell

Derek explained to committee that in the January 2024 committee meeting we will be bringing forward many revisions and updates to the Program and Operational Guidelines for the FY25 grant year. The updates are occurring for several reasons.

- a. Formula Funding schedule
 - i. Moving to a 3-year grant cycle for Formula funding
- b. Program Guidelines updates comply;
 - i. Partially for new law.
 - ii. Partially to make with new Data collection system coming online next grant year.

- 4. Adjourn Next Meeting:** Meeting was called to adjourn at 1:40 by Roger Pryor. Next meeting was agreed upon by the committee to be in person on January 18, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. -2:30 p.m.



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees

From: Jesica Mackey, Chairman, Finance and Administration Committee

Date: November 8, 2023

RE: Finance and Administration Report

The Finance and Administration Committee met via Zoom conference call on November 8, 2023, to receive updates from staff. Detailed meeting minutes are attached. The committee brings forward no action items but does forward the following updates.

First Steps State Office

Financial Report

Mr. Barnes shared the updated financial status of the agency. The total budget for this year is more than \$79 million. Expenditures to date are in line with projections for the new year. And the organization is in good financial condition.

Local Partnership Update

One of the two SLED investigations related to the Local Partnerships is in the process of being closed with no findings or actions needed against the local partnership. The second investigation is ongoing. We received draft financial updates for the local partnerships, and we will take up the final reports in January to determine if any corrective actions are needed. 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.

4K Program

We recently had a fraudulent electronic funds transfer and the state office, along with notifications to all appropriate authorities, has taken all appropriate steps to ensure this does not happen again. In addition, extensive additional banking fraud protections have been completed on all accounts.

The meeting schedule for the Finance and Administration Committee Meeting dates for 2024 are included in our Board packet.

Other updates can be found in the meeting minutes.



Minutes from Finance and Administration Committee Meeting

November 8, 2023

Members present: Jesica Mackey, Chairman, Jacque Curtin, CPA, David Morley

Members not present: None

Nonmembers present: Mark Barnes, Director of Administration; Lavinia Tejada, CPA, Director of Finance and Audits

With all public notices being provided, the Zoom meeting was called to order by Jesica Mackey at 10:00 am. After introductions, a quorum was available, so the Committee was called to order.

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.

We will be presenting the October 31 ending date of the Financial Status Report (FSR) as there will not be time to update it prior to the time the Board Packets are submitted.

State Budget Update

SC First Steps presented its request for the state budget to the Governor in October, for the FY 24-25 fiscal year. The request is for a total of \$15,022,699 in additional recurring funds. The next steps will be to present the request to the House Ways and Means staff and the Senate Finance Staff. The Governor will present his recommendations to the House early in January. One of the requests does include funds for separation from the Department of Education. We have been working with the Executive Budget Office, the Department of Education, and the Department of Administration to develop the plan.

Local Partnerships

Local Partnership Update

1. Mr. Barnes provided an update on the Local Partnerships. He updated the Committee on the two investigations that are ongoing by SLED. Our understanding is that one of the investigations is in the process of being closed, with no findings against the Local Partnership. The second one is ongoing.
2. The draft financial reports for local partnership match, carryforward cash amounts, and administrative expenses were reviewed and discussed. The final reports will come back to the

Committee in January at their next meeting for possible corrective actions on carryforward amounts. In the draft reports all local partnerships accomplished the match requirement for the year as well as being below the 13% cap on administrative expenses.

3. Additional information was provided related to the status of Act 81 implementation. Board work is being completed and work is being done on getting all the local partnerships transferred to PEBA from the various school districts. All local partnerships hit the November 1 deadline on getting applications submitted. The next steps include additional forms and deposits due December 1. We are working closely with Manley Garvin and PEBA to make sure all components of the benefits administration are available when the transition takes place in April. We may need to look at an outside benefits administrator to assist. We should know what the need is soon.

4K Program Update

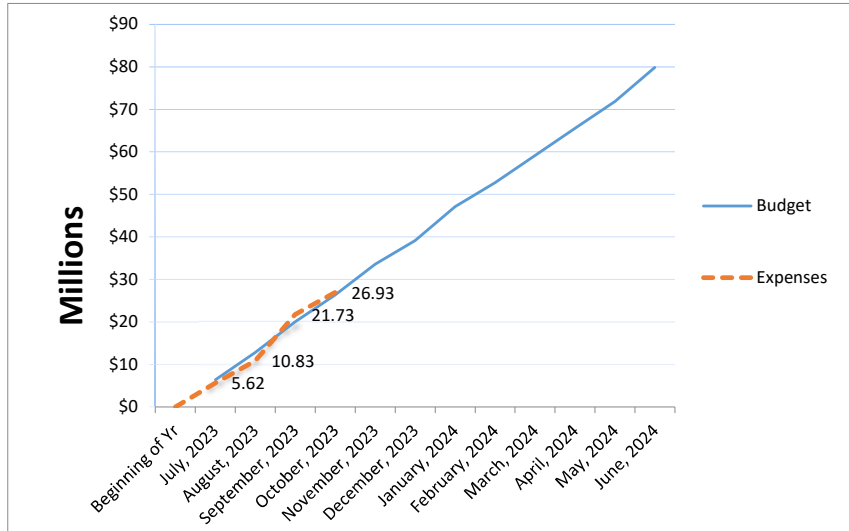
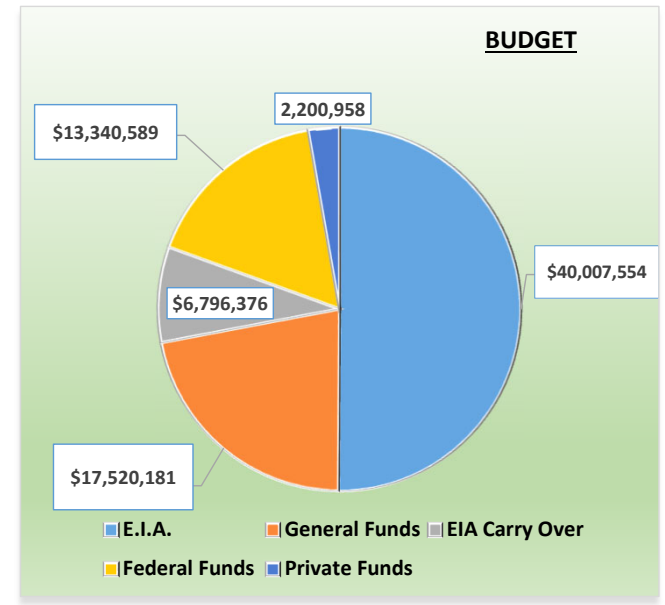
Early in November we became aware that we had received a fraudulent ACH electronic funds transfer form from one of our 4K providers. Due to this form being processed we ended up with approximately \$15,000 in fraudulent payments. We immediately reviewed our processes and evaluated all steps that allowed this to occur. We then immediately implemented revised processes to ensure this will not happen again. We notified the State Treasurers Office, SLED, the bank, and Manley Garvin, CPA's as per our requirements to let them know what had taken place. We are taking all steps necessary to ensure no further incidents take place. We have been in the process of putting in place all possible fraud protections over the last several months through the bank and these were accelerated after the incident. At this point all accounts are covered by extensive state of the art fraud protection.

Other

Finance and Administration Committee Meeting Dates:

Committee discussed the dates for the meetings for next year and will forward those dates to the Board for review.

With no further business to discuss for the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 am.



**As of
October 31, 2023**

Spending Rates	
Projected	33%
Actual	34%

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	9,693,087	13,813,537	7,335,241	-	\$ 7,335,241	2,020,458	16,107	2,004,351	32,862,323	9,709,193	\$ 23,153,130
PRIVATE 4-K	36,719,794	15,824,110	20,895,684	2,607,565		2,607,565			-	39,327,359	15,824,110	\$ 23,503,249
EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL	1,160,993	6,053	1,154,940	2,654,066	391,933	2,262,133	78,000		78,000	3,893,059	397,986	\$ 3,495,073
POLICY & ACCOUNTABILITY	2,936,700	870,832	2,065,868	743,717	73,888	669,829	102,500	54,229	48,271	3,782,917	998,949	\$ 2,783,968
GRAND TOTAL:	64,324,111	26,394,082	37,930,029	13,340,589	465,821	12,874,768	2,200,958	70,335	2,130,623	79,865,658	26,930,238	\$ 52,935,420

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	
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 October 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	NTCC
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

\$ 28,063

**2024 FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE TIME LINE/ KEY
DATES**

2024

January 10, 10 am – Finance and Administration Committee Meeting

Allocation Review and Approval, 15% Match, Administrative Rates, Carry Forward Amounts

February – State Board Meeting

Allocation Review and Approval
Financial Status Report

March 13, 10:00 am- Finance and Administration Committee Meeting

990 Form for FY 2022

April – State Board Meeting

Review, if necessary, 990 Form

May 8, 10:00 am- Finance and Administration Committee Meeting

Updates on Programs and Financial Matters

June - State Board Meeting

Updates on Programs and Financial Matters

July 10, 10:00 am - Finance and Administration Committee Meeting

Updates on Programs and Financial Matters

August – State Board Meeting

Updates on Programs and Financial Matters

September 25, 10:00 am – Finance and Administration Committee Meeting

Review State Budget Request
Financial Audit Presentation, Review and Receipt

October – State Board Meeting

Review State Budget Request
Financial Audit Review and Receipt

November 20, 10:00 am– Finance and Administration Committee Meeting

Updates on Programs and Financial Matters

December – State Board Annual Meeting

Updates on Programs and Financial Matters



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees

From: Georgia Mjartan

Date: December 6, 2023

RE: **Executive Director's Report**

I. Year In Review

- [South Carolina First Steps 2023 Annual Report](#)
- Local Partnership Annual Reports

II. First Steps 4K

2023-24 School Year (comparisons with previous year)
SY23-24 Day 45 (October 24, 2023) compared to SY22-23 Day 45

Enrollment

- **3,745** students enrolled for at least one day (**19.7%** increase (SY23 n = 3,129))
- **3,593** students enrolled point-in-time (**18.4%** increase (SY23 n = 3,035))

III. Countdown to Kindergarten Summer 2023

IV. Fundraising and Development

- FY21 Actual: \$61,536
- FY22 Actual: \$111,172
- FY23 Actual: \$197,484
- FY24 Goal: 363,750

Board Giving Goal – 100%

Calendar Year 2023 Actual – 39%

V. Grant Awards

4K Expansion Grants

- Corinth Community Development Corporation, Union \$30,000
- Early Start Child Development Center, Conway \$30,000
- Footprints Learning Center of Fountain Inn, Fountain Inn \$19,902
- MEGA CDC, Gilbert \$27,168
- Miss Tammy's Little Learning Center, Boiling Springs \$30,000
- Our Lady of Peace, Aiken \$30,000

READY: Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation

- Lee County First Steps, \$200,000 over 2 years
- Pickens County First Steps, \$200,000 over 2 years
- York County First Steps, 196,200 over 2 years

VI. Act 81 Implementation



- First Steps staff has engaged with a consultant, Mary Dell Hayes, to assist with developing the formal process for reviewing local partnership executive director hiring and salary submissions. Multiple input sessions will be hosted as an opportunity to share thoughts and suggestions regarding the interim process currently in effect.
 - a. Two optional virtual sessions will be held for the First Steps Board of Trustees:
 - i. Wednesday, January 24, 2024 from 3:00-4:00pm
 - ii. Monday, January 29, 2024 from 10:00-11:00am
- All interested local partnerships submitted the insurance eligibility forms to PEBA by the November 1 deadline.
- First Steps staff has identified a nonprofit attorney to assist in establishing core personnel policies and procedures for the local partnerships.

VII. SC First Steps Transfer Plan Development

- Submitted to Chairman of Senate Finance, Chairman of House Ways and Means, and Governor a report outlining the development of a plan to transfer South Carolina First Steps from the South Carolina Department of Education prior to December 1 deadline.

VIII. HR Updates

- SC First Steps welcomes the following new staff members:
 - o Kenya Johnson, Nonprofit VISTA
 - o Rashard Harmon, Accounting Intern
- Currently, the organization has the following vacancies:
 - o Chief Financial Officer
 - o Accounting Intern
 - o Finance Administrative Assistant
 - o First 5 SC Technical Support Specialist
 - o Fiscal Specialist

December Board Report – Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023) in Review

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

First Steps 4K served 3,650 students in in-person, full-day 4K in 279 classrooms within private, non-profit, and faith-based First Steps 4K providers through the 180th day of school (+9% over FY22)

Expanded the Reach of our Existing Programs

During the second year of statewide expansion, First Steps 4K served 4,285 students through day 220 (+3% over FY22)

Since the initiative's inception, First Steps 4K+ has resulted in 4,447 children being approved for a child care scholarship that provides extended care for First Steps 4K students and child care or afterschool care for their siblings under 12 years old.

Increased Competence and Confidence of Early Care and Education Workforce

Trained over 350 First Steps 4K leaders and 450 First Steps 4K teachers at the in-person First Steps 4K Academy in preparation for the 2022-2023 school year.

Centered Family and Client Voice

Measured the impact of First Steps 4K on parent-reported outcomes, including parents' ability to attend work or school and children's academic readiness, through online surveys. Over three out of four parents whose children are in extended day or extended year programs report being able to work or attend school full-time because of their child's enrollment in First Steps 4K. Over eight in ten parents say their 4-year-old child is excited about books and can recognize the alphabet because of their enrollment in a First Steps 4K program.

Parents and providers are loyal ambassadors for our programs and services. Consistently we have heard that over 80% of participants would highly recommend our programs and services such as Countdown to Kindergarten, Countdown to 4K, Parents as Teachers, and First Steps 4K to families with eligible children in their community.

Continued establishing a culture of listening to and valuing "client voice" through the implementation of "Your Voice Matters," a surveying / continuous feedback loop process involving clients participating in First Steps local partnership programs and First Steps 4K programs. To date, 17 feedback loops have been completed on First Steps 4K, Parents as Teachers, Countdown to Kindergarten, Child Care Quality Enhancement, and Quality Counts with 4,948 individual survey responses from clients ranging from teachers and childcare directors to families. The success of the ongoing partnership with Listen4Good was highlighted in a case study published by Listen4Good in November 2022. Staff have also presented about their feedback work to other early childhood practitioners and leaders at conferences, such as the 2023 Nurturing Developing Minds Conference and the 2023 SC Two-Gen Summit, and during webinars. Staff presented alongside Listen4Good's Associate Director of Partner services in April 2023 during the International Council of Parents as Teachers Leaders (ICPATL) leadership meeting.

Clyburn Early Childhood Center Opens

The Clyburn Early Childhood Center opened its doors in June 2023. The center offers a variety of early education programs, including First Steps 4K. The Clyburn Early Childhood Center is the result of combining

public and private resources among local partners, SC First Steps 4K, the Town of Kershaw, the Arras Foundation and Lancaster County First Steps. The new center is located in the former bank building, a two-story 10,000 square foot structure built in 1910 and is the only licensed child care facility in Kershaw. The Clyburn Early Childhood Center can serve 60 4K students, with plans to expand services to 3-year-old children in the future.

Clyburn Photos:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H7IUj2XEy5VM_ss0csqhtxah-00oJvQo/view?usp=drive_link

https://drive.google.com/file/d/133wjwA6K2IF6fp_wRIMxaZaRYR4i962G/view?usp=drive_link

First Steps 4K Video

In an effort to expand its reach and welcome more families into the program, First Steps 4K unveiled a promotional video that showcases the program's offerings and highlights the transformative impact it can have on children's early learning experiences. This visually engaging video invites viewers to step into a First Steps 4K classroom where children are engaged in activities that foster their academic, social, and emotional development. The video was filmed at MEGA Child Development Center in Gilbert, SC. The family and children in the video were enrolled in First Steps 4K at the time of the video shoot.

To maximize its impact and reach a wider audience, the full-length video was segmented into shorter, more digestible clips specifically designed for sharing across various social media platforms. This strategic approach ensures that the program's key messages and visuals can be readily absorbed by potential families, effectively increasing awareness and interest in First Steps 4K.

Link to the video: https://youtu.be/_-dQ4dK6ntg?si=_V6lby-b03y9XmQU or <https://bit.ly/3QleN1B>

First Steps 4K on Day 45 of the 2023-2024 School Year (October 24, 2023)

First Steps 4K served 3,745 students for at least one day through Day 45 of the 2023-2024 school year (+19.7% increase over last year's total served for at least one day through day 45; n=3,129).

First Steps 4K had 3,593 students enrolled on Day 45 of the 2023-2024 school year (+18.4% increase over last year's total enrolled on day 45; n=3,035).

On Day 45, 65% of approved 4K slots were filled (FY24 goal is 60%).



First Steps 4K works!



First Steps 4K works to get children ready for school.

75%

kindergarten ready in **literacy**

72%

kindergarten ready in **language**

67%

kindergarten ready in **math**

77%

kindergarten ready **cognitively**

78%

kindergarten ready **socially**

81%

kindergarten ready **physically**

GOLD by TeachingStrategies® results from Day 180 of school year 2022-23.

First Steps 4K works for families.



All First Steps 4K programs are in-person, 5 days per week, throughout the school year. Most providers offer a full day (8 hour) program.



Families have a variety of options including year-round or school-year only programs and in a variety of settings, like child care centers and private schools.



Children benefit from small class sizes (1:10 teacher to child ratio) and an evidence-based instructional curriculum that prepares them for school.



First Steps 4K Plus ensures care and education for the whole family, leaving no child behind.

First Steps 4K empowers parents to work.

89%

credit their ability to work or go to school to their child's participation in First Steps 4K.

“

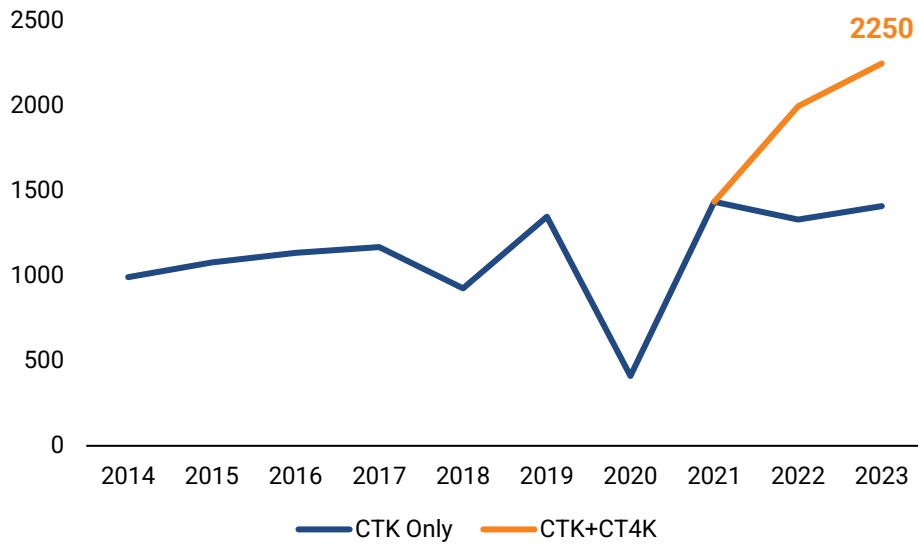
I am grateful and thankful for this program. I am able to work my full time job and my child is learning very well.

– Parent of First Steps 4K Student, Richland County

”

First Steps 4K Family Engagement Survey Results from Spring 2023.

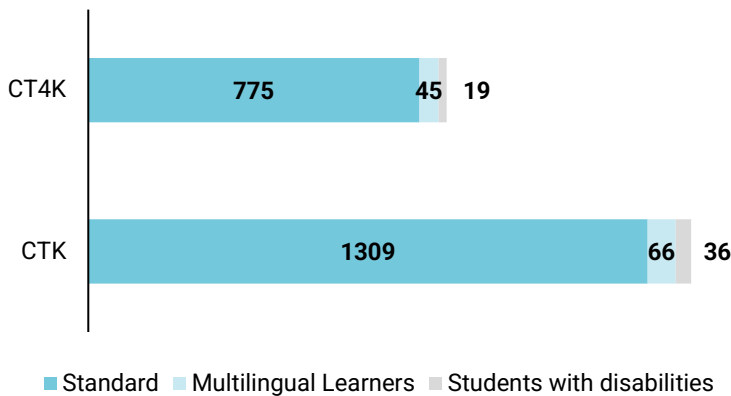
Countdown programs served 13% more children in Summer 2023 compared to the number of students served during Summer 2022.



With the addition of Countdown to 4K (CT4K) in Summer 2022, Countdown programs are serving more children than ever!

Countdown programs support smooth school transitions among families with diverse learning needs.

2,250 children were served by Countdown programs in summer 2023.



94% of families would highly recommend the Countdown program to a friend or family member.

Countdown to Kindergarten seeks to become an evidence-based program.

Through a partnership with the Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Center at the University of South Carolina, external evaluators are working to synthesize evidence of the impact of the CTK program.

