



# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026



**Mission:** From Day 1 to Grade 1, Richland First Steps empowers our community to nurture children, so they are ready to thrive in school.

**Vision:** A community committed to ensuring the school readiness of its children.

## Values

**Trust** – We will foster trust within the organization and the community.

**Love** – “Love is the best motivator for learning and growth.” *Dr. Becky Bailey, founder of Conscious Discipline*

**Respect** – We value the feelings, wishes, rights and traditions of others.

**Racial Equity** – We will work to change the systems that keep families from having the tools and resources to equip their children for success in school and life.

**Quality** – Quality + Readiness = Success



*Our mascot, Richie, has made a new friend!*

# Priority Needs: Summary

Through a series of community convenings, a needs assessment and asset mapping process, the following needs were prioritized for Richland County. See our full needs assessment here:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:808e394d-efb0-3ba8-844a-50e321d51537>

## 1. EARLY INTERVENTION, MENTAL HEALTH, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

In addition to traditional early intervention services for developmental delays, more services for child mental and behavioral health are needed.

## 2. ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE

Working families need child care that is high quality, safe, affordable, and accessible to them.

## 3. UNDERSTANDING CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Parents and child care teachers need more information about young children's developmental milestones and how they can help children be ready to thrive in school.



# Objectives

**1. CHILDREN WILL ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN HEALTHY AND READY TO LEARN.**

**2. QUALITY CHILD CARE WILL BE ACCESSIBLE TO FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.**

**3. AN ENGAGED RFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL GUIDE THE AGENCY.**



# Objective One: CHILDREN WILL ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN HEALTHY AND READY TO LEARN.

## STRATEGY 1.1

Community Health Education & Resource connection

### SMART GOAL

1. By June 2026, work to start Phase One of Family Connects International in Richland County. It is an evidenced-based family engagement model that supports all families of newborns with a nurse visit in the hospital to offer resources and then 3-4 weeks later with the mother's consent for a well-check and further resource assistance. The Richie lovey will be a gift to each family that contains our contact info. We will connect with Greenville First Steps (who is starting a pilot of FC), DHEC, Blue Cross/Blue Shield and/or the Duke Endowment and other sponsors to generate interest, funds and support.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Family Connects International, DHEC, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Duke Endowment

# **Objective One: CHILDREN WILL ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN HEALTHY AND READY TO LEARN.**

## **STRATEGY 1.2**

### Community Education

#### **SMART GOAL(S) & COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

1. By the end of June 2026, we will expand our school readiness campaign and make it more encompassing and intentional around our mascot Richie, Richie's Roundup for Readiness, with twice a month social media videos, website engagement, using board members, community members and staff to communicate school readiness tips and goals, child development milestones and other ways for parents/caregivers to get their young children ready to thrive in school. This will be in addition to regular social media engagement.
2. Social media engagement will increase by 50% each year.

#### **COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)**

Community partners agencies such as WIC, Richland Library, Power in Changing, ABC Quality, Richland DSS

# **Objective One: CHILDREN WILL ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN HEALTHY AND READY TO LEARN.**

## **STRATEGY 1.2**

### Community Education

#### **SMART GOAL(S) & COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

3. Two Start Off Strong events per year will take place. These events bring school readiness and community resources together for families with young children.
4. 100 bags (or more) per year with RFS info, a book and school readiness tips for families with young children will go to agencies in Richland County, such as the Richland County Sheriff's department, to be given out when they see the need in the Lower Richland area of the county.
5. RFS flyers with info and school readiness tips given to families through Food Share and Harvest Hope bags every other month each year.

#### **COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)**

WIC, Thrive Richland, SCIMHA, SCFS 4K, financial institutions, Children's Trust, Food Share, Harvest Hope distribution sites, Richland County Sheriff's Department, Power in Changing, Richland Library

# Objective One: CHILDREN WILL ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN HEALTHY AND READY TO LEARN.

## STRATEGY 1.3

All Richland First Steps programs

### SMART GOAL

1. By June of 2026, all RFS staff will be certified in Mental Health First Aid in order to better serve our clients and the community. The goal is to help the adults in the lives of children be mentally healthy in order to impact the mental health of children.
2. By June of 2026, staff turnover rate will decrease by 10% from 47% to 37%.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR

- SC Thrive

## STRATEGY 1.4

Early Head Start centers and Home Visitation

### SMART GOAL

- By June 2026, children in our programs will have at least one dental visit by the time they are 3 years old. Two dental visits will occur by the time they are 6 years old if they remain in our Home Visitation program.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Dental Bus, Local dental offices



# Objective One: CHILDREN WILL ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN HEALTHY AND READY TO LEARN.

## STRATEGY 1.5

### Early Head Start

#### SMART GOAL

1. By September of 2023, Early Head Start will be fully enrolled and operative serving our grant number of 125 children – 88 in centers, 37 in Home Visitation – and stay fully enrolled through June 2026.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- First Five SC, Local School Districts, Head Start

## STRATEGY 1.6

### Home Visitation

#### SMART GOAL

1. By June 2026, increase the number of families served by Home Visitation by 50 families.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- First Five SC, Richland DSS

# Objective Two: QUALITY CHILD CARE WILL BE ACCESSIBLE TO FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.

## STRATEGY 2.1

Community child care program

### SMART GOAL

- By the end of June 2026, partner with community agencies to apply for an Early Head Start/Head Start grant to open a child care center that will serve homeless children, as well as children whose families qualify for Head Start/EHS, and to meet other needs of families with children age infant through 5 years old. Offer 4K classrooms through SCFS 4K.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Homeless No More, SCFS 4K, Local School Districts, United Way of the Midlands



# Objective Two: QUALITY CHILD CARE WILL BE ACCESSIBLE TO FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.

## STRATEGY 2.2

Excellence in Care and Early Learning (ExCEL)

### SMART GOAL(S)

- By August 1, 2023, the ExCEL program will have enrolled at least 15 new child care providers (at least 10 centers and 5 home providers) to the Enhancement Team who will receive Environment Rating Scale pre and post assessments.
- By August 1, 2023, 80% (12) of the 15 enrolled providers above will be located in targeted zip codes of 29203, 29204, 29209, 29210, 29044, 29052, and 29061.
- By June of 2026, three of the above 15 child care providers on the Enhancement Team will have gone up one level in the ABC Quality program.
- By the end of June 2026, there will be an outreach program to county child care providers that brings and/or sends monthly information like school readiness goals, health info, literacy tips and child development milestones to be shared with staff and parents. The goal is to build connections with county child care providers.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- ABC Quality, LENA, SCFS Quality Enhancement, SC Endeavors, SC DSS, SCFS 4K, Richland Library

# Objective Two: QUALITY CHILD CARE WILL BE ACCESSIBLE TO FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.

## STRATEGY 2.3

### Early Head Start

#### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the beginning of 2024, the RFS Virginia Wingard Center will attain ABC Quality Level A and remain Level A.
2. By June of 2026, the RFS Ridgewood Center will have retained its ABC Quality Level A rating.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- ABC Quality, SC DSS, SC Endeavors



# Objective Three: AN ENGAGED RFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL GUIDE THE AGENCY.

## STRATEGY 3.1

### RFS Board of Directors

#### SMART GOAL(S)

1. Each year 75% of the Board members will attend at least 3 Board committee meetings.
2. Each year 100% of the Board members will contribute financially personally.
3. Each year 100% of the Board members will facilitate donations to RFS, such as through Midlands Gives.
4. Each year the Board will serve as a Community Convener of Early Childhood services for Richland County at two Board meetings per year. They will discuss the early childhood issues and ideas for solutions/collaborations.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Central Carolina Community Foundation, SCFS Board resources, Together SC

# Overarching Measure(s) of Success

## INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES

By FY26, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Richland County First Steps will increase from 6% to 8%.



# Acknowledgments

Thanks so much to the following members of the Richland County community who participated in our Needs Assessment process that facilitated our Strategic Plan:

The Richland First Steps Board of Directors  
Richland First Steps Early Head Start Policy Council  
Richland First Steps staff  
Rep. Annie McDaniel, District 41  
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# Strategic Plan Process

## CONVENE

Held community convenings to develop a vision for young children and their families

October 2022 – January 2023



## UNDERSTAND

Reviewed local data and map assets to understand the state of young children, their families, and the early childhood system

October 2022 – March 2023



## PRIORITIZE

Organized the insight gathered from the convenings and data to prioritize the concerns, needs, and gaps the partnership wants to address and formalized Needs Assessment

January 2023 – March 2023



## PLAN

Wrote the partnership's three-year Strategic Plan using the Needs Assessment

March 2023 – May 2023



## APPLY

Utilize the Strategic Plan to inform the partnership's Annual Formula Funding Grant Application

May 2023, May 2024, May 2025



## IMPLEMENT

Execute the programs and services outlined in the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026



## MONITOR

Track the partnership's progress on implementing programs to fidelity and on achieving the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026

