

# MCCORMICK COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026



## Mission

We exist to fully support the success of ALL children and their families in McCormick County.

## Vision

All children in McCormick County will have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## Values

- **Children:** We prioritize children as well as their families and caregivers.
- **Comprehensive approaches:** We support the family in all aspects of their life (i.e. healthcare, transportation, food, basic needs, etc.)
- **Equity:** All children and families have the same opportunities and resources for success.
- **Community:** We value community partners and participants throughout the County.

# Message from the Executive Director



**NaToya Cartledge**  
Executive Director  
McCormick County First Steps

During the next three years, we will focus heavily on our mission to fully support the success of all children and their families within our county. We plan to further our mission by advancing meaningful board engagement, strengthening existing local and state partnerships, and creating a family-centered approach to early childhood education.

McCormick County First Steps staff and board members will regularly revisit this plan to ensure it accurately reflects the organization's changing needs.

*-NaToya Cartledge*

# 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



# Priority Needs: Summary

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

<https://www.mccormickcountyfirststeps.org/board/#reports>

## **1. Strengthen existing partnerships**

Participants discussed that the McCormick County First Steps has a limited budget and resources and will need to collaborate with others for transportation, recreation, and community resources.

## **2. Advocate for and promote the importance of Early Childhood Education**

Leadership discussed that most of the population is of retirement age and the bulk of the resources go to the elderly. McCormick County First Steps will need to stress the importance of kindergarten readiness, early childhood education and careers with the entire community for others “to connect the dots” and see how everything is connected.

## Priority Needs: Summary (con't)

### **3. Explore and create ways to fundraise for day care and scholarship opportunities**

The qualitative data showed an overwhelming need for a day care. Leadership would like an analysis done to truly understand how many children need a day care in the community and then to creatively find a way to raise the funds for this to be a viable option. So many small children are being raised by their aging grandparents and screens.

### **4. Explore alternative ways to engage the WHOLE family**

Participants shared how frustrating previous attempts have been in engaging the entire family. Minimal to no attendance at events is going to require McCormick County First Steps to think creatively in how to engage the entire family. McCormick County First Steps recognizes that several barriers (limited accountability, child abuse, poverty) exist and need to find ways to promote hope and encouragement for families with small children.

# Objectives

- 1. Advance meaningful board engagement**
- 2. Strengthen existing local and state partnerships**
- 3. Create a family-centered approach to early childhood**

# Objective One: Advance meaningful board engagement

## STRATEGY 1.1

Invest in board governance, fundraising training, and capacity building for Board members and the Executive Director.

### SMART GOAL

1. By the end of FY 2024, we will conduct three mini-board trainings and one board retreat.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with the State Office of First Steps and ISI Consulting and other outside experts to train our board.

## STRATEGY 1.2

Train board members to advocate for the importance of early childhood education.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2025, board members will have advocacy talking points.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with the State Office of First Step to provide advocacy training and sample talking points.



# **Objective One:** Advance meaningful board engagement

## **STRATEGY 1.3**

Launch a fundraising campaign led by the Board with updated marketing materials and website.

### **SMART GOAL**

1. By the end of FY 2026, we will increase the amount unrestricted funds collected annually from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

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

- We will work with Elevated Designs to update our website and will partner with a videographer and marketing consultant to update and create new materials for increased awareness and understanding of our services. We will receive training from the State of Office of First Steps related to fundraising and work with our top donors including the Rotary Club, the Lions Club and the Lutheran Church by the Lake.

# **Objective Two:** Strengthen existing local and state partnerships

## **STRATEGY 2.1**

Meet regularly with key leaders to increase communication and community involvement.

### **SMART GOAL**

1. By the end of FY 2026, the number of partners will increase by three.

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

- We will meet regularly with the school district (including the Superintendent and leadership), the State First Steps office and Program Officer, City and County council members and other key partners highlighted in our asset map.

# **Objective Three:** Create a family-centered approach to early childhood

## **STRATEGY 3.1**

Expand Nurturing Parents program to focus on fathers and male caregivers.

### **SMART GOAL**

- By the end of FY 2026, a Nurturing Parents program focused on fathers/male caregivers will be established and serve at least ten fathers/male caregivers.

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

- We will receive funding from State office of First Steps and will work the Nurturing Parenting Program to update the curriculum. We will reach out to the SC Center for Fathers and Families to determining promising practices to engage with fathers.

# **Objective Three:** Create a family-centered approach to early childhood

## **STRATEGY 3.2**

Host family-centered events focused on identified populations and underserved parts of the County that would benefit from our services (i.e. rural, low-income, elementary aged population).

### **SMART GOAL**

- By the end of FY 2025, we will increase our attendance at community events from 0-5% to 25% to 30%.

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

- We will partner with the Paul Dennis Development Youth Center, local churches, McCormick Elementary School, McCormick Head Start and Durant Family Daycare Center.

# Overarching Measure of Success

## INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES

By FY2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase from 34.5% (FY2023) to 40%

# Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Board of Directors and Staff of MCFS, Durant Family Daycare, McCormick County DHEC, McCormick County Head Start, McCormick County Library, and McCormick Elementary School for their help and participation in this Strategic Plan.

And a special thanks to ISI Consulting for facilitating the strategic planning process.

## **Funding:**

The project described was supported through South Carolina First Steps by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0080-02-01 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.”