

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026



## Mission

Bamberg County First Steps in collaboration with community partners, will empower local families and caregivers to prepare young children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to ensure that every child arrives at school ready to learn.

## Vision

Every child in Bamberg County will arrive at school healthy and ready to learn.

## Values

Families are the single most important influence on the development of their young children.

The work of supporting families and caregivers is a collaborative effort between state and local stakeholders within the public, private and faith sectors.

School readiness is the result of a child's development in many areas, with each contributing to the child's success.

High quality services must be individualized and adaptable to meet the unique needs of children and families.

To achieve desired results, services must be high-quality and grounded in strong evidence. Our initiative will operate within a culture of accountability.

The years of early childhood are a critical window of development during which much of human potential is shaped.

# Message from the Executive Director



**Pauletta Plowden**

Executive Director

Bamberg County First Steps

*“Bamberg County First Steps continues to be the needle that pulls the thread to help families, community partners and key stakeholders realize the importance of investing in high quality early education. With every new academic step our children make, they become better students. Preparing our children and their families will help weave the fibers for their future sustainability. Bamberg County First Steps’ legacy is preparing our children and their families to step confidently into the future knowing that they are loved, they are healthy and ready for the future!”*

*It is with enthusiasm that Bamberg County Steps reevaluated and reassessed its mission and vision with our community partners, families and friends to adequately determine the direction that we must take in enhancing the lives of our children. Our commitment is to offer high quality strategic goals and objectives to ensure a brighter future for the economic growth of our small rural county.*

*“Bamberg County’s children are our greatest and most valuable asset, investing in their lives is pivotal to the future of our county”!*

*Pauletta Plowden, Executive Director  
Bamberg County First Steps*

# Message from the Board Chair



**Tracy Golden**  
Board Chair  
Bamberg County First  
Steps

*Bamberg County First Steps has thrived diligently to make sure our local children start school healthy and ready to learn. They have done an excellent job engaging families, teachers and community partners to help improve early childhood development for children aged zero to five years old in Bamberg County. I enjoy hearing about their parents programs each month and all the impressive activities that was done.*

*Our board works collaboratively to make sure our children and families in Bamberg County are provided continuous support and resources by connecting with our board members, school district and community partners and agencies. It gives me the greatest of pleasure to serve as Bamberg County First Steps Board Chair.*

Sincerely,

*Tracy Golden*

# 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 Bamberg County. See our full needs assessment here:

<https://www.scfirststeps.org/media/rhfpvid3/bamberg-county-fy24-26-needs-assessment.pdf>

## 1. Parenting Services

With 60.2% of children living in single parent families and 26.4% of children living in concentrated areas of poverty, Bamberg County Steps will partner with the local community schools and agencies in helping parents in becoming their child's first and most important teacher. Families will be enrolled in a comprehensive parenting program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed.

## 2. Child Care Scholarships

Access to quality early care education improves school readiness and long term academic outcomes, and provides parents with the opportunity to work and attend school. With 39.1% of children in Bamberg County living below the poverty level, Bamberg County First Steps will partner with South Carolina Department of Social Services to provide childcare scholarships to eligible children to receive free tuition at quality childcare centers.

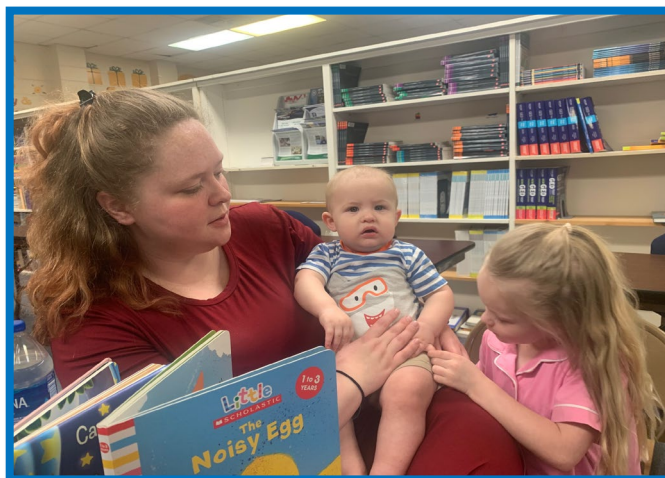
## 3. Child Care Deserts

Establishing the conditions that promote educational achievement for children is critical, beginning with quality prenatal care and continuing through the early elementary years. High-quality preschool programs for 3- to 4-year-olds help set the stage for future skills development, well-being and learning, particularly families from low-income households. With 39.1% of children ages 0-17 living in households with incomes below the poverty level, survey results indicated a high needs for family support in finding high quality daycare centers. ABC quality childcare providers, lay a vital foundation that helps children to develop healthy habits, stay in school, graduate on time, pursue postsecondary education and training and successfully transition to adulthood. With 47% of Bamberg County considered a childcare desert, Bamberg County will work strategically to mobilize early childcare partners and daycare providers to ensure that all children arrive at the first grade healthy and ready to learn.

# Objectives

**Bamberg County First Steps will increase the capacity of parents to be their child's first and most important teachers by expanding the Parents as Teachers evidence based home visiting program.**

1. Bamberg County First Steps, a National Blue Ribbon Parents as Teachers (PAT) Affiliate, will increase parental capacity by utilizing the Parents as Teachers (PAT) Curriculum, an evidence-based home visiting program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed.
2. The Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program will integrate services utilizing the Life Skills Progression and other Needs Assessments to refer and link families to additional interventions.
3. The Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program will integrate services with the DSS/ABC Childcare Scholarships Strategy for working families and those attending school fulltime.



# Objectives

**Bamberg County First Steps will improve and strengthen families by affording quality DSS/ABC Child Care Scholarships to working families and those attending school fulltime.**

1. Bamberg County First Steps Childcare Scholarships are vouchers that affords working parents opportunities for quality daycare to promote the healthy development and school readiness of their children.

2. Bamberg County First Steps Childcare Scholarships Strategy will integrate quality services with the Parents As Teachers Evidenced-Based (PAT) Model.

3. Bamberg County First Steps Childcare Scholarships Strategy will collaborate with the Department of Social Services, our local school district and local First Steps funded and non- funded childcare providers to ensure quality services.

4. Bamberg County First Steps will work strategically to mobilize early childcare partners and daycare providers to ensure that all children arrive at the first grade healthy and ready to learn.



# Objectives

**Bamberg County First Steps will connect families of preschool children to childcare providers and services designed to strengthen families and promote optimal child development.**

1. Bamberg County First Steps will serve as a local portal for connecting families of preschool children to community based services in order to ensure the school readiness of our youngest learners. The partnership will work diligently with local and regional coalitions and committees that focus on the mission of children and families.
2. Bamberg County First Steps will increase access, build capacity and strengthen interagency accountability and community collaboration to promote a decrease in the childcare desert environment.
3. Bamberg County First Steps will develop community educational and outreach activities to raise awareness and engage the local community about the importance of First Steps and its value-add to our youngest learners.



# **Objective One: Bamberg County First Steps will increase the capacity of parents to be their child's first and most important teacher by expanding the Parents as Teachers evidenced based home visiting program.**

## **STRATEGY 1.1**

### Parents As Teachers

#### **SMART GOAL(S)**

1. By the end of FY24'-FY26', Bamberg County First Steps will increase enrollment of young families by 5%.

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

- Bamberg County First Steps will partner with our local school district, SCFS 4K, Department of Social Services and DHEC to increase parenting services and recruitment options.

## **STRATEGY 1.2**

### Parents As Teachers/Community Education/Engagements

#### **SMART GOAL(S)**

1. Bamberg County First Steps will host two community events with our local school district and community engagement partners each year.

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

- Bamberg County First Steps will partner with Bamberg County School District, DSS, DHEC, Headstart, Bamberg County Library and local childcare providers.

# **Objective Two:** Bamberg County First Steps will improve and strengthen families by affording quality DSS/ABC Childcare Scholarships to working families and those attending school fulltime.

## **STRATEGY 2.1**

### ABC Childcare Scholarships

#### **SMART GOAL(S)**

1. By FY'24-FY'26, Bamberg County First Steps will increase the numbers of families receiving childcare scholarships by 5%
2. Bamberg County First Steps will ensure that 90% of families enrolled in parenting services will qualify for a scholarship to enhance school readiness options.

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

- Bamberg County First Steps will partner with our local school district, local childcare providers, DSS, DHEC, Family Solutions of the Low Country in its recruitment efforts of our youngest learners.

## **STRATEGY 2.2**

### Professional Childcare Training and Development.

#### **SMART GOAL(S)**

1. By FY24'-FY26' Bamberg County First Steps will increase the number of childcare teachers participating in professional developments options by 10%.

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

- Bamberg County First Steps will partner with our local school district, DSS, SC Endeavors and local childcare providers.

# **Objective Three: Bamberg County First Steps will connect families of preschool children to services designed to strengthen families and promote optimal child development.**

## **STRATEGY 3.1**

### Community Education

#### **SMART GOAL(S)**

- By FY 24'-FY26', Bamberg County First Steps will increase its presence as a local convener in the community by 5%.
- Bamberg County First Steps will host community events with our partners during the spring and fall of each year to include the following: A Health and Wellness Initiative, Lunch and Learn Seminar, The Santa's Little Helpers Toys, Food and Clothing Initiative, Community Yard Sales and a Back to School Bash.
- Bamberg County First Steps will support this goal by ensuring state/local convener meetings, childcare directors meetings and local partners advisory board meetings.

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

- Bamberg County First Steps will partner with local childcare providers, Bamberg County School District, Department of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Services, Family Solutions of the Low Country, Headstart, and Bamberg County Library and other community key stakeholders.

# Overarching Measure(s) of Success

## **BAMBERG COUNTY FIRST STEPS WILL INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES IN OUR COMMUNITY**

By FY' 2024, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Bamberg County First Steps will increase from 10% to 15%.

## **BAMBERG COUNTY FIRST STEPS WILL INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HIGH INTENSITY PROGRAMS FUNDED BY FIRST STEPS**

By FY' 2025 the number of young learners served by the local partnership will increase by 5%.

## **BAMBERG COUNTY FIRST STEPS WILL INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDCARE OPPORTUNITES OFFERED BY FIRST STEPS**

By FY' 2026 the percentage of quality childcare providers will increase by 5% to offset the childcare desert status.

# Acknowledgments

*Bamberg County First Steps would like to graciously extend a thank you to everyone who worked to support the vision and mission of our comprehensive strategic planning process. This important endeavor included representation from our First Steps Partnership Board, local school district, local state agencies, parents, community key stakeholders and businesses.*

*“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.”*

