

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026



## Mission

To help families and caregivers in Beaufort County prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.

## Vision

Every child in Beaufort County will have the resources needed to be prepared for success in school.

## Values

- The years of early childhood are a critical window of development during which much of human potential is shaped.
- 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.
- Services must be individualized and adaptable to meet the unique needs of children and families.
- We value, and demonstrate in our collaborative work and advocacy, diverse perspectives in the development of public policy and programs.
- To achieve desired results, services must be high-quality and grounded in strong evidence. First Steps operates within a culture of accountability

# Message from the Executive Director



**Betty Washington**  
Executive Director  
Beaufort County First  
Steps

Beaufort County First Steps staff and board continually evaluates program offering to ensure we are meeting the needs of the families and children in our community. Working together with families, community agencies and business leaders has been very insightful. This process has given us the opportunity to get our message out and to meet with different groups to gain their perspective of needs in our community.

As we continue with planning for the future and in putting together our 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, our hope is the information gathered during this process will allow us to continue to reach the population that needs our services and fill gaps as charged by legislation.

Thanks again to everyone who helped in this effort.

# 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 Beaufort County. See our full needs assessment here: <link>.

## 1. Quality and Affordable Childcare

Beaufort County lacks the resources necessary for families with infant and toddlers needing quality childcare.

Beaufort County has approximately 48% licensed and/or regulated facilities participating in Quality ABC program (affordability), most with limited or no infant toddler care slots.

## 2. Parenting Classes & Connection to Community Resources

Surveys were conducted with 75 families of which 73% of respondents expressed interest in parenting programs and resources for single parent households.

Beaufort County encompasses a number of rural areas throughout the county, connecting with families in these areas can be challenging.

There are currently three main parenting programs in Beaufort County.

Through Universal staffing, organizations work collaboratively to connect families to needed resources.

## 3. Affordable Housing

The lack of affordable and accessible housing is a concern for low-to-moderate income families; increased rates of homelessness.

# Objectives

## **1. CHILDREN ARE CARED FOR IN A QUALITY ENVIRONMENT TO PROMOTE KINDERGARTEN READINESS**

Increase the number of provider participating in quality enhancement and training opportunities.

## **2. CHILDREN ARE HEALTHY AND SAFE**

Increase the number of children receiving on-time well visit checks.

## **3. FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE AND SAFE HOUSING**

Connect families living in substandard conditions to community resources to improve the health and safety of the whole family.

# Objective One: Ensure children are ready for kindergarten

## STRATEGY 1.1

### Quality Enhancement

#### SMART GOAL(S)

1. Increase yearly professional development training for staff to expand knowledge of early child development.
2. Increase number of childcare providers participating in Quality Enhancement initiative.
3. Increase number of participants participating in ABC Quality
4. increase number of available & affordable infant/toddler slots.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with Beaufort County Schools, Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care Facilities to increase professional development trainings attended by staff.
- We will partner with childcare licensing to recruit childcare facilities to participate in QE initiative, and ABC Quality.

## STRATEGY 1.2

### Community Education

#### SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, we will host at least two community outreach events to provide books and educational resources to families with young children; particular emphasis on children 0-5 years.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with Beaufort County Schools, Head Start, Early Head Start, Beaufort County Library and other community agencies in planning our community outreach events.

# Objective Two: Connecting Families to Parenting Classes & Community Resources

## STRATEGY 2.1

### Parents as Teachers

#### SMART GOAL

- By the end of FY26, we will increase the proportion of our clients accessing parenting classes.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will continue to partner through Universal Staffing to connect families to parenting resources. .

## STRATEGY 2.2

### Community Education

#### SMART GOAL(S)

- Each year, we will host at least two community resource fairs.
- We will increase number of families accessing First 5 portal to connect to community resources.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- We will partner with DHEC, Beaufort County Schools, Head Start, Beaufort County Library, Baptist Church of Beaufort in planning our community resource fairs.



# Objective Three: Families have safe affordable housing

## STRATEGY 3.1

### Core functions

#### SMART GOAL(S)

- Families in Beaufort County have increased knowledge about affordable housing opportunities in the surrounding areas.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with Habitat for Humanity, Black Chamber of Commerce, United Way of the Lowcountry and Beaufort Jasper EOC to connect families with housing resource and information.

## STRATEGY 3.2

### Parents as Teachers

#### SMART GOAL(S)

- Families connected to the First Steps parenting program with have training in budget, home ownership, and financial literacy.

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with Black Chamber of Commerce, Financial Doctor, and other like agencies to provide training on financial literacy and home ownership opportunities.

# Overarching Measure(s) of Success

## **1. INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION AND EARLY CARE PROGRAM IN BEAUFORT COUNTY**

By 2026, the percentage providers serving children under age 6 who benefit from First Steps quality enhancement and training efforts will increase by 2%.

## **2. INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES**

By 2026, increase the number of children served through First Steps programs by 2%

## **3. MORE CHILDREN ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN READY FOR SUCCESS**

By 2026, the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will increase by 2% each year.

- In 2021 463 of 1422 demonstrated readiness on KRA

# Acknowledgments

Beaufort County First Steps staff distributed paper surveys to families, community partners and were engaged in seven face-to-face meetings to collectively gather information for 2024-2026 Needs assessment.

We would like to acknowledge parents and caregivers for their continued support of Beaufort County First Steps in providing valuable feedback needed to complete our Needs Assessment. We would also like to recognize the local partnership board for their time and contributions to the Needs Assessment process.

Staff were engaged in conversation with many community leaders to gain an understanding of the needs in our community and gather sufficient information needed to put together our strategic plan for 2024-2026.

Many thanks to all involved.

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