

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026





Mission

To provide quality services and support for Greenwood County families with children newborn through five years old.

Vision

To strengthen parents and teachers with appropriate practices that develop social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills of Greenwood County's young children.

Values

Children: From prenatal development through age five, our focus and priority are young children and their families and caregivers.

Relationships: We cultivate positive, supportive, respectful, and reinforcing interactions between people that shape development, build community, increase success and productivity, foster learning and growth, and affirm the unique value of individuals, caregivers, parents, and children.

Equity: We ensure all people have the opportunity and resources to be successful and that all voices are solicited and heard.

High quality: We ensure that our programs and services are culturally-responsive, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate and are delivered with fidelity to the model being implemented. Our products, services, and operations are marked by excellence.

Results: We produce meaningful and measurable impacts and outcomes.

Message from the Executive Director



Santasha S. Highley

Executive Director

Greenwood County First Steps

I am thrilled and honored to present to you, alongside the Greenwood County First Steps Board of Directors, a well-researched, highly innovative, and community driven strategic plan. Our talented team, accomplished so much this year through sheer determination, passion for the children of Greenwood County, and the willpower to be able to continue providing high quality services to our community. The creativity and growth that the Board of Directors have shown and the expertise that they share with us instills a sense of confidence, support, and strength. We are surrounded and uplifted by an outstanding community that provides support, feedback, ideas, and encouragement. Most of all, my gratitude and honor at being able to be a part of this process, this organization, and this community are the only feelings that can compare with the excitement and energy that I feel looking forward through the lens of this strategic plan and seeing where we are headed. I thank you for your support, invite your ideas, suggestions, as we look forward and continue supporting the children and families of Greenwood County.

Sincerely,

Santasha S. Highley

Message from the Board Chair



Loretta Parker

Board Chair

Greenwood County First Steps

I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to the community we serve, for all the ways you have come together to support the mission and vision of Greenwood County First Steps. During this year, our board and staff undertook a strategic planning process and we looked back at the impact we have made, and look forward to ensure that our strategies remain robust and aligned with the needs of the community. While we will continue to grow and evolve to respond to changing needs in the community, we will always stay true to our mission and vision in supporting the children and families of Greenwood County.

Sincerely,

Loretta Parker

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 Greenwood County. See our full needs assessment here:

www.gwdfirststeps.org

1. Strengthen relationships with schools, day cares, colleges and community health organizations and create regular feedback loops for quality improvement.

Leadership discussed the importance of having regular meetings with schools and day cares to more fully understand needs and advocate for the importance of reading, Kindergarten Readiness and wrapping around the entire child. Most regular meetings were suspended with COVID and have not been re-established.

2. Focus efforts on the teen population (teen dropouts and pregnant teens).

Greenwood County First Steps has received funding to focus on this population with a new grant.

3. Build trust among Hispanic families

Consider partnering with Lander's ESL (English as a Second Language) department along with Community Initiatives and PASO's to build trust among the Hispanic Community. Once trust is established, leadership believes that Hispanic families will refer other families in need.

4. Develop parent and child goal setting to promote emotionally health individuals.

Leadership discussed that integrating goal setting into all activities will be important.

Objectives

1. STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

2. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TEENS RECEIVING SERVICES FROM GREENWOOD COUNTY FIRST STEPS

3. BUILD A PRESENCE IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

4. IMPROVE THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS IN GREENWOOD COUNTY

Objective One: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TEENS RECEIVING SERVICES FROM GREENWOOD COUNTY FIRST STEPS

STRATEGY 1.1

Test and refine alternative methods of recruiting.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2024, we will have completed two test cycles for recruitment.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will work on partnering with local community initiatives and the school district's alternative school to reach the pregnant teen population.

STRATEGY 1.2

Explore ways to simplify the enrollment process.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2025, we will have implemented a shorter enrollment process.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will work with our internal staff and the State Office to explore ways the application process can be broken down over multiple visits.

Objective One: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TEENS RECEIVING SERVICES FROM GREENWOOD COUNTY FIRST STEPS

STRATEGY 1.3

Create a social media account for targeted messaging.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY 2026, we will have a minimum of two social media platforms with at least 70 followers.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will work with the state office and internal staff to create and monitor our social media according to best practices.

STRATEGY 1.4

Spend time repairing the working relationship with the school districts.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2026, we will be meeting with the school districts a minimum of two times a year.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will work with Greenwood School Districts 50, 51, & 52 to establish regular contact and collaboration.

Objective Two: STRENGTHEN

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

STRATEGY 2.1

Get involved with local coalitions and school boards

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2026, we will have participated in over 30 events with local coalitions and school boards.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will reach out to community partners such as the three school districts, Greenwood County, Chamber of Commerce, Boys and Girls Club, or PASOs for opportunities to collaborate

STRATEGY 2.2

Focus on established a working relationship with the elementary schools.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2025, we will have scheduled reading outreach events with at least six of the Greenwood County elementary schools.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will reach out to the Greenwood County elementary schools to schedule these events.

Objective Two: STRENGTHEN

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

STRATEGY 2.3

Promote First Steps through advertising and website linkage.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2024, we will have launched an ad campaign.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will partner with elev8 designs to create our campaign.

STRATEGY 2.4

Be a presence at local festivals and events.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2026, we will have given out at least 1,000 books at community events.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will reach out to Greenwood County, Festival of Flowers, Festival of Discovery, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Boo Bash for the opportunity to First Steps to distribute books.

Objective Three: IMPROVE THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF PARENTS AND GUARDIAND IN GREENWOOD COUNTY

STRATEGY 3.1

Launch the Family Café Program.

SMART GOAL(S)

By end of FY2026, 50 parents will be reached through the cafe.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

Our internal staff with partner with the State Office for quality improvement and programming assistance.

STRATEGY 3.2

Take our services to the parents.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2025, mobile outreach services will be established.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will partner with Self-Regional Hospital, Local Doctor's Offices, and United Ministries, among others, to bring a mobile health unit to parts of Greenwood County.

Objective Three: IMPROVE THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF PARENTS AND GUARDIAND IN GREENWOOD COUNTY

STRATEGY 3.3

Assist parents with resources to access affordable childcare.

SMART GOAL(S)

By the end of FY2026, 100 families will be referred to DSS for a voucher.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will partner with DSS, local daycares, and 4k programs to identify parents in need.

Objective Four: BUILD A PRESENCE IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

STRATEGY 4.1

Hire a bilingual team member integrated in the Hispanic community

SMART GOAL(S)

By FY2024 a bilingual team member will be hired in at least a part-time capacity.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will reach out to Hispanic churches and community members in Greenwood County to recruit our applicants.

STRATEGY 4.2

Provide Hispanic families with easy-to-find, accessible information about early childhood and parenting services

SMART GOAL(S)

By FY2026 all our written resources will be translated into Spanish at a 5th grade reading level.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will work in partnership with our bilingual hire and the Spanish-speaking community to ensure these documents are legible and accessible.

Objective Four: BUILD A PRESENCE IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

STRATEGY 4.3

Grow a referral pipeline with Community Initiatives and other partners.

SMART GOAL(S)

By FY2026 we will service at least three Hispanic families.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will reach out to Hispanic churches, PASOs, the school districts, and La Clinica Gratis to recruit families.

STRATEGY 4.2

Increase community outreach to promote trust among the Hispanic population.

SMART GOAL(S)

By FY2025 we will host our first outreach even in Spanish.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

We will work in partnership with PASOs and the local churches to organize this event.

Overarching Measure(s) of Success

MORE CHILDREN ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN READY FOR SUCCESS

By 2025, the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will increase by 1% each year to 34.4%.

Acknowledgments

Greenwood county First Steps would like to thank everyone who was involved with the Strategic Planning Process. Your commitment and hard work is greatly appreciated.

“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.”