



MISSION

South Carolina First Steps works collaboratively to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential with engaged support from their parents, caregivers, and communities.

VISION

We will be successful when all children reach their highest potential.

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 impact and outcomes.

Every Child Ready

2020-2025 Strategic Plan



Ensure children are ready for kindergarten

- 1.1 Families are supported as their child's first and most important teachers.
- 1.2 Families can access and afford high quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of their children and families.
- 1.3 Children are healthy and safe.
- 1.4 Children and families experience seamless transitions and a sense of belonging across early learning programs and from early childhood into kindergarten.



Close gaps through equity: A fair chance for every child

- 2.1 Disparities in educational, developmental, and health outcomes for children of color and from low-income families are reduced
- 2.2 Children and families experience culturally and linguistically responsive, developmentally appropriate, accessible practices in the home, at child care, in the classroom, with healthcare providers, and with the public early childhood system.
- 2.3 Children and families can access and afford high quality programs and services regardless of zip code.
- 2.4 South Carolina First Steps deliberately designs and fosters an environment that recognizes, affirms and values diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels from the board of trustees and the state office to local partnerships and 4K providers.
- 2.5 The voices of stakeholders including, most importantly, families and children, as well as early childhood educators, providers, local partnerships and community partnerships and community partners, will be solicited and heard, and changes will be made based on continuous feedback/quality improvement cycles. Communication, openness, and transparency with stakeholders at all levels will be considered a valued duty of the organization.



Increase funding for First Steps' investment in early childhood

- 3.1 State funding for early childhood programs through South Carolina First Steps is significantly increased, providing sufficient resources to ensure the school readiness of South Carolina's children most at-risk for early school failure.
- 3.2 Federal funding for South Carolina First Steps increases.
- 3.3 Private funding for South Carolina First Steps grows significantly, helping to diversify the organization's sources of funds, providing flexibility to innovate, target specific needs, and expand promising programs.
- 3.4 First Steps is recognized for good governance, transparency, continuous quality improvement, administrative and fiscal excellence, and innovation in the development and administration of a unique public-private partnership model.
- 3.5 First Steps establishes itself clearly as a statewide grant-maker, funder, and intermediary, operating collaboratively with other funders and within funder networks to learn from each other, enhance impact through collective efforts, and pool resources when appropriate in order to more successfully drive positive outcomes for young children and their families in South Carolina.



Create a coordinated and family-centered early childhood system

- 4.1 The early childhood state system works collaboratively, aligning resources, strategy, and focus across agencies to benefit young children and their families.
- 4.2 Families with young children will have knowledge about and be able to access all publicly-funded programs, services and resources for which they and their children are eligible.
- 4.3 Early childhood professionals, policymakers, system and community leaders, advocates and business allies will have the opportunity to learn from experts and peers to advance in their profession through collaborative, cross-agency, and cross-system learning and professional development opportunities.
- 4.4 The voices of early childhood leaders and of the families impacted by the early childhood system are solicited and heard by institutions and agencies serving children and their families.
- 4.5 Build on First Steps' presence in every county to serve as a hub for early childhood services and local system building.
- 4.6 South Carolina First Steps becomes a state and nationally recognized leader in the early childhood field.



Overarching Measures of Success

Progress Report, FY20 - FY22

1 INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES

By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase from 17% to 20%.

FY20 = 19% **FY21** = 24% **FY22** = 37%

2 INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HIGH INTENSITY PROGRAMS FUNDED BY FIRST STEPS

By 2025, the percentage of children directly served by First Steps enrolled in high intensity programs will increase from 28% to 40%.

FY20 = 15% **FY21** = 18% **FY22** = 10%

REVISED IN APRIL 2022: By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps high intensity programs will increase from 5% to 8%.

FY20 = 3% **FY21** = 4% **FY22** = 5%

3 INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY FIRST STEPS

By 2025, the percentage of children under age 6 who benefit from First Steps quality enhancement and training efforts will increase from 12% to 15%.

FY20 = 12% **FY21** = 18% **FY22** = 15%

4 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 2% each year from 37% to 47%.

FY20 = 39% **FY21** = 27% **FY22** = 36%

5 REDUCE THE RACIAL/ETHNIC GAP IN KINDERGARTEN READINESS

By 2025, the gap in the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment between White kindergartners and Black/Hispanic kindergartners will reduce by 1% each year from 19% to 15%.

FY20 = 20% **FY21** = 18% **FY22** = 24%

6 CREATE AN ACCESS PORTAL TO INCREASE SOUTH CAROLINA CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE OF AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

By 2025, First5SC.org will launch and include five categories: child care & early education, health & safety, special needs & early intervention, food & nutrition, and parenting & family support.

FY21 = Procurement process completed; vendor selected; eligibility criteria mapped

FY22 = Eligibility portal launched; common application requirements gathering initiated