



# FY25 DISCRETIONARY GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

## INTRODUCTION

South Carolina First Steps is pleased to offer the enclosed funding opportunities to First Steps Local Partnerships for the FY 2024-2025 fiscal year.

Based on the forecast of available funding in FY 2024-2025, funding priority for this enclosed opportunity will be to:

**1. Ensure that impactful programs and services for children and families continue for an additional year.**

READY, state formula recaptured funding, and other public and private funds will be used to:

- a. Continue successful multi-year program expansions that are currently in their final year of funding. This opportunity applies to ESSER-funded parenting, PASOs, and Healthy Steps programs, and to Connected Families programs only.
- b. Continue supporting affiliate costs for successful Parents as Teachers programs (included on the Program Strategies page of the Formula Funding application)

**2. Support Local Partnerships serving as AmeriCorps Sites.**

READY and state formula recaptured funding will be available to all Local Partnerships selected to be AmeriCorps Sites for FY 2024-2025, at the following levels: \$7,000 per member serving as a HIPPI Parent Educator and \$5,000 per site for hosting one or more Family and Community Engagement members. SC First Steps will cover member living allowances and other program costs at the state level with federal AmeriCorps and private funding.

**3. Provide one-year Infrastructure and Capacity funding to Local Partnerships with funding gaps.**

Limited READY funding is available to eligible Local Partnerships that demonstrate a significant financial need in order to sustain services in FY 2024-2025.

Note there will **not** be a targeted funding opportunity for Family Café and Supporting Care Providers through Visits (SCPV) pilot programs in FY 2024-2025. Local Partnerships wishing to operate these programs may do so with formula or other funding.

### **Instructions for READY grantees:**

Local Partnerships that have been awarded one or more READY Grants for Infrastructure and Capacity, Child Care, Children and Families, or Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation (CC4ECI) all have multi-year awards that continue through FY 2024-2025. Therefore, READY grantees are not included within this funding opportunity. READY grantees must, however, include their READY grant budgets for FY25 within their board-approved FY 2024-2025 Budget Spending Plan.

### **Eligibility for Funding**

To be eligible for a **new** grant award, Local Partnerships must not have any active or unresolved Corrective Action Plans at the time of state board approval. Local Partnerships under Corrective Action that are current recipients of a grant award in FY 2023-2024 are eligible to receive continuation funding for the same grant at the discretion of SC First Steps, depending on the nature of the Corrective Action.

Within this one grant application there are multiple funding opportunities, or sections. Information on partnership eligibility and expectations for receiving funding are included within each application section. Local First Steps partnerships may apply for one, some, or all of the funding opportunities their partnership is eligible for, as determined by their partnership board.

It is the intent of South Carolina First Steps to award funding to all eligible Local Partnerships that submit complete requests and agree to the funding opportunity's terms and conditions. In the event that more Local Partnerships apply for a particular opportunity than there is available funding or capacity, the selection criteria described within each application section will be used to prioritize awards.

There is no limit as to how many grant awards a local partnership may receive for FY 2024-2025, with the following caveat: **no local partnership may receive more than 10% of the state's annual allocation of READY funding**, which is currently 10% of \$3 million or \$300,000. SC First Steps may use non-READY funding as available to make awards to Local Partnerships that would otherwise exceed this cap, in order to maintain services to children and families as much as possible.

Local Partnership boards must vote to approve all grant application requests contained within this opportunity.

Each grant award will be signed as an amendment to the local partnership's FY 2024-2025 Grant Agreement, with an effective period from **July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025**.

Please review the following Fiscal and Reporting guidelines, which apply to all funding within this application package.

# FISCAL GUIDELINES FOR FY 2024-2025 DISCRETIONARY GRANT FUNDING

## General

- **All requested grant funding must be included in the Local Partnership's FY 2024-2025 Budget Spending Plan that is approved by the Local Partnership Board and submitted with their Formula Grant Application.** Each grant opportunity section includes information on how grant funds should be entered within the Budget Spending Plan.
- Once grant awards are approved by the state board, Local Partnerships will then make necessary changes to their Budget Spending Plan and submit the revised BSP to their Program Officer for approval. Once approved, the Program Officer submits the revised BSP to the SC First Steps Finance Office.
- Local Partnerships may choose to apply jointly for funding, but one Local Partnership must be named as the lead applicant. The lead Partnership should be the one to submit the funding request.
- Grant funds must be used to **supplement, not supplant**, existing funding from state and other sources.

## Spending Grant Funding, Carryforward Guidelines

- As a condition of receiving funding, Local Partnerships must commit to budgeting and expending grant funds in a timely manner and for eligible activities using the correct Fund Code(s) and Program Code(s) as applicable. Coding guidelines and eligible uses of grant funding will be outlined within the grant award document.
- Funding sources for FY 2024-2025 discretionary grants are largely state funds, and therefore carry the same conditions and restrictions as state formula funding as outlined in the **SC First Steps Program and Operational Guidelines** (LINK?). Note that state-funded grant awards increase the Local Partnership's 15% match requirement.
- Any use of grant funding to increase compensation for the Local Partnership Executive Director must adhere to the requirements and approval process contained in the SC First Steps Program and Operational Guidelines.
- State funds cannot be used for food or financial incentives, such as gift cards.
- It is the expectation that all discretionary grant funding to Local Partnerships be expended by the end of the grant period. Timely and accurate expenditures of grant funds help SC First Steps assure its funders that their investment is being deployed efficiently and effectively. Therefore, the carryforward policy for discretionary grants is as follows:
  - All but multi-year READY grants will have a No Carryforward Policy. All prior year funding unspent by June 30, 2024 will either a) be recaptured by SC First Steps and used for funding obligations in the new fiscal year or b) relinquished to the funder, as is the case with ESSER funds.
  - Multi-year READY grants (Infrastructure and Capacity, Child Care, Children and Families, CC4ECI) have the same carryforward policy as state formula funding. Note READY grantees in their second year of funding during FY 2023-2024 will

have any carryforward funding in excess of 15% recaptured by SC First Steps for FY 2024-2025 if it is the second year of an excess of 15%.

### **Shared Costs/Cost Allocation**

When allocating discretionary grant funds into their Budget Spending Plan, Local Partnerships may include a reasonable allocation of grant funds toward shared costs (Personnel and Operations), taking into account:

- Size of the program
- Expansion vs. New programs
- Duration of the proposed program
- Other programs offered by the partnership
- Administrative costs charged to discretionary grant funding must be described in detail.

Grant awards will consider the cost per client for similar programs and the overall cost-benefit of the project to children, families, providers, and the community.

### **REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR FY 2024-2025 DISCRETIONARY GRANT FUNDING**

Timely and accurate reporting is needed for targeted grant funding, in order for SC First Steps to submit required program reports to its funders. Therefore:

- Submit timely, complete, and accurate data in the First Steps Data Collection system, as applicable; and
- Provide program data as requested, adhering to report deadlines and using report templates provided by SC First Steps as applicable.

SC First Steps will submit all required program and expenditure reports to external funders.

# AMERICORPS

## Introduction

First Steps Local Partnerships have the opportunity to express their interest in continuing their participation as an AmeriCorps Site, or express their interest in becoming an AmeriCorps Site, for FY 2024-2025 by completing this section.

## Type of Funding: recurring

Local Partnerships in good standing as an AmeriCorps site will have the opportunity to renew their funding in future years, provided SC First Steps remains an AmeriCorps grantee and recurring state funding is available.

## Eligibility

All Local Partnerships interested in recruiting an AmeriCorps Member(s) to support service delivery to families. To become a new AmeriCorps site for FY 2024-2025 or receive new funding for hosting Family and Community Engagement members, Local Partnerships must have no unresolved Corrective Actions at the time of state board approval.

## Selection

1. Local Partnerships that are continuing AmeriCorps sites will request the number of service positions and service hours of interest. These continuing sites will be prioritized for selection if they are considered in “good standing,” i.e., the site was successful in recruiting its approved slots in FY 2023-2024 and members are, on average, serving the minimum number of hours per stipend period for their slot type as documented in the America Learns timekeeping system.
2. Continuing AmeriCorps sites may request changes in terms of the number of members, member role(s), and member service hours. Fulfilling AmeriCorps change requests to existing AmeriCorps sites in good standing will take priority prior to the review of other continuing and new Local Partnership sites.
3. Remaining service positions will be provided to other continuing AmeriCorps sites and to Local Partnerships who are interested in becoming a NEW AmeriCorps site. New sites will be selected based on the availability of the desired role. If more Local Partnerships are interested than there are available service positions, then program staff will move through the following options, in the order listed, as required by the submissions:
  - a. appeal to the SC AmeriCorps Commission to add member slots for SC First Steps
  - b. request a conversion of service hours to accommodate the request
  - c. prioritize placement within priority counties as defined by the SC AmeriCorps Commission:
    - o Counties Underrepresented by AmeriCorps SC: all counties except Anderson,

- Charleston, Georgetown, Greenville, Kershaw, Lancaster, Lexington, Richland, Spartanburg, and Sumter
- Counties with a high Social Vulnerability Index:  
[https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/interactive\\_map.html](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/interactive_map.html)

## **Description of AmeriCorps Roles and Available Funding**

**Parent Educator Role:** AmeriCorps Members provide the National HIPPY Network (NHN) curriculum to prioritized First Steps 4K families and local families with four-year-olds who are not receiving any preschool services.

Funding: AmeriCorps Sites will receive \$7,000 in state funds per Parent Educator to budget for member professional development/training, incentives, mileage, and Site Supervisor support costs.

**BSP Instructions:** Budget in Program Code 225 (HIPPY), Fund Code = AmeriCorps HIPPY. Count as state funds within formulas on the BSP Summary Page. Do not budget any prior year funding from ESSER or PDG.

**Family and Community Engagement Role:** AmeriCorps member activities should include outreach for the Local Partnership (service site) and support for client-level engagement, referral, and follow-up.

Service functions for this role align with Local Partnership Core Function guidance, which includes program promotion, family follow-ups, resource development, and operating group connections. The Family and Community Engagement role provides the ability to undertake new initiatives when staff capacity is a concern, although, there is no guarantee for recruiting or retaining an AmeriCorps member.

Funding: AmeriCorps Sites will receive \$5,000 in state funds for hosting one or more Family and Community Engagement members, to budget for member professional development/training, incentives, mileage, and Site Supervisor support costs. Funding may also be used for direct costs associated with member activities, within the limitations of state funding.

**BSP Instructions:** Budget in Core Functions 180 or other program(s) as applicable. Fund Code = AmeriCorps FCE. Count as state funds within formulas on the BSP Summary Page.

# Sustaining successful programs

## Intensive, Evidence-Based Parenting Strategies

### Introduction

This one-year funding opportunity is restricted to ESSER-funded parenting programs, whose current funding source ends in 2024.

### Type of funding: **non-recurring**

After one year of READY and/or state recaptured funding, programs will have the opportunity to apply for multi-year READY funding in FY 2025-2026, along with the current slate of Local Partnerships that have multi-year READY grants. Without additional funding, this future opportunity will be highly competitive.

### Eligibility and Selection

Sufficient funding is available for Local Partnerships that wish to continue their same ESSER-funded parenting program in FY 2024-2025 if they are a) not on a Compliance Plan for their grant award in FY 2023-2024; b) meeting their FY 2023-2024 projected to serve; and c) not on a Corrective Action Plan or are meeting the requirements of their Corrective Action Plan to the satisfaction of SC First Steps.

Once the Local Partnership name is selected from the draw-down menu, the partnership's funding eligibility will pre-populate with the current year's funding amount and projected to serve. The partnership will then describe their continuing funding request and enter their proposed projected to serve for FY 2024-2025.

Local Partnerships that have Grant Compliance Plans, or are falling short of their projected to serve requirements, may still apply but must respond to additional questions to justify their funding request.

**BSP Instructions:** Request only the amount necessary to achieve the projected to serve target. Written justification must be provided for funding requests above the Partnership's FY 2023-2024 grant award. Budget in applicable Program Code. Fund Code = "Parenting FY25". Count as state funds within formulas on the BSP Summary Page. Do not budget any prior year funding from ESSER or PDG.

# Sustaining successful programs

## PASOs Connections for Child Development

### Introduction

This one-year funding opportunity is restricted to current ESSER-funded PASOs programs, whose funding source ends in 2024.

### Type of funding: **non-recurring**

After one year of READY and/or state recaptured funding, programs will have the opportunity to apply for multi-year READY funding in FY 2025-2026, along with the current slate of Local Partnerships that have multi-year READY grants. Without additional funding, this future opportunity will be highly competitive.

### Eligibility and Selection

Sufficient funding is available for Local Partnerships that wish to continue their PASOs Connections for Child Development program in FY 2024-2025 if they are a) not on a Compliance Plan for their grant award in FY 2023-2024; b) meeting their FY 2023-2024 projected to serve; and c) not on a Corrective Action Plan or are meeting the requirements of their Corrective Action Plan to the satisfaction of SC First Steps.

Once the Local Partnership name is selected from the draw-down menu, the partnership's funding eligibility will pre-populate with the current year's funding amount and projected to serve. The partnership will then describe their continuing funding request and enter their proposed projected to serve for FY 2024-2025.

Local Partnerships that have Grant Compliance Plans, or are falling short of their projected to serve requirements, may still apply but must respond to additional questions to justify their funding request.

**BSP Instructions:** Request only the amount necessary to achieve the projected to serve target. Written justification must be provided for funding requests above the Partnership's FY 2023-2024 grant award. Do not budget for PASOs Central Office costs – those fees are under negotiation between PASOs and SC First Steps and will be added to your award. Budget in Program Code 909. Fund Code = "PASOs FY25". Count as state funds within formulas on the BSP Summary Page. Do not budget any prior year funding from ESSER or PDG.



# Sustaining successful programs

## HealthySteps

### Introduction

This funding opportunity is restricted to current ESSER-funded HealthySteps programs, whose funding source ends in 2024.

### Type of funding: recurring

Local Partnerships operating Healthy Steps programs have funding secured for the next two years (FY 2024-2025 and FY 2025-2026) through interagency agreements among SC First Steps, SCDSS and SCDHEC.

### Eligibility and Selection

Sufficient funding is available for Local Partnerships that wish to continue their HealthySteps program in FY 2024-2025 if they are a) not on a Compliance Plan for their grant award in FY 2023-2024; b) meeting their FY 2023-2024 projected to serve; and c) not on a Corrective Action Plan or are meeting the requirements of their Corrective Action Plan to the satisfaction of SC First Steps.

Once the Local Partnership name is selected from the draw-down menu, the partnership's funding eligibility will pre-populate with the current year's funding amount and projected to serve based on the area's panel size. The partnership will then describe their continuing funding request and enter their proposed projected to serve for FY 2024-2025.

Local Partnerships that have Grant Compliance Plans, or are falling short of their projected to serve requirements, may still apply but must respond to additional questions to justify their funding request.

**BSP Instructions:** Request only the amount necessary to achieve the projected to serve target. Written justification must be provided for funding requests above the Partnership's FY 2023-2024 grant award. Budget in Program Code 910. Fund Code = "HealthySteps FY25". Count as state funds within formulas on the BSP Summary Page. Do not budget any prior year funding from ESSER. Please attach a FY 2024-2025 budget breakdown from the clinic site(s) to this grant application.

# Sustaining successful programs

## Connected Families

### Introduction

This funding opportunity is restricted to the six Local Partnerships participating in the Connected Families program, which connects families connected with the child welfare system to customized supports through Parents as Teachers.

### Type of funding: recurring

Funding will transition in FY 2024-2025 from private funding from The Duke Endowment and Doris Duke Foundation to public funds (either state funds or federal Title IV-E funding) via one or more agreements with SCDSS.

### Eligibility and Selection

Sufficient funding is available for Local Partnerships that wish to continue their Connected Families program in FY 2024-2025 if they are on target to meeting their FY 2023-2024 projected to serve and are either not on a Corrective Action Plan or are meeting the requirements of their Corrective Action Plan to the satisfaction of SC First Steps.

Once the Local Partnership name is selected from the draw-down menu, the partnership's funding eligibility will pre-populate with the current year's funding amount and projected to serve based on the number of funded parent educator positions. The partnership will then describe their continuing funding request and enter their proposed projected to serve for FY 2024-2025.

Local Partnerships that are falling short of their projected to serve requirements may still apply but must respond to additional questions to justify their funding request.

**BSP Instructions:** Request only the amount necessary to achieve the projected to serve target. Written justification must be provided for funding requests above the Partnership's FY 2023-2024 grant award. Budget in Program Code 201. Fund Code = "Connected Families FY25". Count as state funds within formulas on the BSP Summary Page. Do not budget any prior year funding.

# READY Infrastructure and Capacity Grants, Round 3

For Local Partnerships with insufficient funding to sustain their current level of service to children, families, and providers

## Introduction

This one-year funding opportunity of up to \$30,000 is restricted to Local Partnerships that can demonstrate a compelling need for additional funding to sustain services, including but not limited to enrolling staff in PEBA retirement and/or health benefits.

## Type of funding: **non-recurring**

The intent is to provide limited gap funding for Local Partnerships with the greatest financial need, in the event the FY 2024-2025 state budget does not increase funding for Local Partnerships.

## Eligibility and Selection

Limited funding is available for Local Partnerships not on a Corrective Action Plan that have a need for additional funding of up to \$30,000 to sustain services; a demonstrated track record of program performance, fiscal accountability and grant compliance; and have exhausted all other available funding from SC First Steps. Local Partnerships that are READY Infrastructure and Capacity grantees from Rounds 1 and 2 may apply.

**BSP Instructions:** Request only the amount necessary to achieve client-level and staff-level outcomes. Budget in applicable Program Code(s) as needed. Fund Code = 120 (READY Capacity). Count as state funds within formulas on the BSP Summary Page.