



First Steps Partnership Operational Best Practice Self-Assessment

Aligned with the First Steps Program Accountability Standards &

Local Partnership: _____ Date Completed: _____ Completed By: _____

Criteria	Yes	No	N/A
Section 1: Governance and Operations			
1. a) Does the board adhere to their By-Laws and Operating Procedures and the First Steps Legislation?			
b) Does the board implement program strategies in accordance with SC First Steps Program Accountability Standards?			
• Does the board exercise due diligence when selecting program strategies and when establishing new program strategies?			
• Does the board commit to allowing sufficient time for successful implementation (minimum two years recommended)			
c) Does the board comply with the terms and conditions contained in the local partnership's annual grant agreement with SC First Steps?			
d) Does the board maintain, at a minimum, two committees for assessing and implementing its responsibilities?			
e) Does the board implement the current strategic plan by approved by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees?			
f) Does the board maintain:			
• All current approved policies/procedures/standards?			
• Board minutes?			
• Records of all meetings?			
2. a) Is a board orientation provided for new board members that includes the partnership vision/mission, bylaws, compliance requirements, policies, programs, and roles and responsibilities as a board member?			
• Do board members participate in an annual review of key documents, including the partnership's grant agreement with SCFS, partnership and program standards, partnership by-laws, and FS legislation?			
b) Do board members participate in ongoing board development?			
c) Do board member term lengths comply with legislative requirements (not to exceed 8 years or 2 consecutive four-year terms)?			
• Do board members regularly attend meetings in accordance with legislative requirements (members cannot miss three consecutive meetings)?			
d) Do board members hold annual elections for partnership board officers? (<i>Officer terms are one year, board chair terms cannot exceed 4 years</i>)			
3. Did the partnership conduct and submit an annual report by the deadline?			
4. Do the board and staff adhere to the practices and procedures outlined in the SC First Steps Operations Manual?			
5. Is data collected and entered in a timely fashion in the FS Data Collection System for all programs/strategies, according to the FS Program Accountability Standards?			
• Did the partnership complete program and vendor registration for all funded strategies, enter projected to serve numbers for each strategy, and begin data entry by September 1 of the program year?			
• Does the partnership enter projected to serve numbers for each funded strategy?			
• Did the partnership begin data entry by September 1 of each program year?			

Criteria	Yes	No	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the partnership and vendor staff adhere to the deadlines for timely data submission (within 30 days of the date of service)? 			
6. Do the board and staff provide an equitable work environment that is supportive of organizational productivity, diversity, and stability?			
7. Do the board and staff prohibit against discrimination against any person or category of persons for services or employment?			
8. Do the board and staff prohibit preferential treatment and nepotism with regard to hiring, supervision, and promotion?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the board adopt, and review annually, the conflict of interest policy contained in their agreement of SCFS? 			
9. Do the board and staff comply with all contractual and legislative deadlines for submitting documents to the SCFS office?			
10. Does the board maintain a current local board roster with email contact information on file with SCFS?			
11. Does the board maintain minutes of each meeting?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the board submit signed, electronic copies of board minutes for the prior fiscal year to SCFS by the deadline for submitting the annual report? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do board committees maintain minutes of each meeting? 			
Does the board composition comply with legislative requirements?			
Does the board composition reflect strategic priorities and constituents of the partnership?			
Does the board hold annual elections for partnership board officers (officer terms are one year, chair cannot exceed 4 years)?			
Does the board have a conflict of interest policy and disclosure form completed by all board members?			
Do members of the board disclose business, personal, or contractual relationships with the organization?			
Are quorums achieved at all board and committee meetings?			
Do all board members make a personal financial contribution each year?			
Does the board have a Chair with no conflicts of interest?			
Does the board conduct an annual review of the Executive Director (ED)'s performance?			
Does the board have material involvement in the establishment of the ED's salary and benefits?			
Does the board have an approved ED Succession Plan?			
Does the local partnership have adequate and appropriate liability insurance to meet its needs?			
Has the local partnership meet with its insurance agent to discuss liability insurance needs?			
Is the local partnership registered with the SC Secretary of State as a charitable organization?			
Human Resources/Staff Development			
Is the annual performance review process in place for all local partnership staff?			
Does the local partnership have board-approved human resources policies that are available to personnel?			
Does the partnership maintain documented evidence that it is a non-discriminatory workplace?			
Does the partnership maintain documented evidence that it is an Equal Opportunity Employer?			
Does the partnership maintain evidence of a written Whistleblower policy and procedure?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the Whistleblower policy been approved in Board minutes? 			
Does the partnership have a method for tracking employee leave?			
Do all partnership staff complete signed timesheets?			

Criteria	Yes	No	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are timesheets approved by the supervisor/board chair as appropriate? 			
Is there a board-approved job description for the Executive Director?			
Are job descriptions, approved by the Executive Director, available for all other staff positions?			
Does the local partnership staff participate in professional development opportunities?			
Does the local partnership perform background checks on all new hires?			
Does the local partnership require staff to sign a confidentiality agreement?			
Does the local partnership provide orientation sessions for new staff?			
Does the local partnership have an identified second in command in the absence of the Executive Director?			
Does the local partnership staff have a code of ethics?			
Fiscal Accountability			
1. Do the board and staff exercise appropriate fiscal stewardship by adhering to the policies and procedures outlined in the SC First Steps Operations Manual?			
2. Do the board and staff consistently monitor the financial condition of the partnership, to include but not limited to: revenue, expenditures and balances within all strategy areas, budget codes and funding sources?			
3. Do the board and staff ensure that funds granted to the partnership by the SCFS BOT are spent in a timely manner in service to children pre-birth to school entry within the partnership's service area?			
4. Does the staff process vendor invoices for payments upon receipt, obtain board member signature if applicable, and immediately forward it to the Regional Finance Manager (RFM)?			
5. Does the board review a financial report at each meeting?			
6. Do the board and staff review internal financial controls annually?			
7. Do the board and staff adhere to the fiscal calendar for deadlines outlined in the SCFS Operations Manual?			
8. Do the board and staff respond in a timely manner to all requests from RFMs and partnership auditors?			
Did the local partnership meet the required match of 15% according to Euthority?			
Did the local partnership meet the required administrative rate of 8%?			
Did the local partnership have any audit findings for the most recently completed audit?			
Does the local partnership maintain accurate records of its assets and their disposal?			
Information Technology			
Does the local partnership have IT policies?			
Does the local partnership maintain a schedule for regular backups of critical applications and data?			
Does the local partnership maintain an IT Disaster Recovery Plan?			
Does the local partnership delete accounts and data system logins for employees and vendor staff immediately upon their leaving the organization?			
Does the local partnership maintain the proper physical security and network security for its IT infrastructure (e.g., locked doors, fire detection, fire alarm, security systems, firewall, spam filter)?			
Does the local partnership have a retention policy for documents, emails, and other forms of communication?			

Criteria	Yes	No	N/A
Collaboration/Community Engagement			
1. Does the local partnership participate in and document efforts to mobilize communities and/or other early childhood agencies/organizations to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children?			
2. Has the board developed an annual Community Education and Outreach plan?			
3. Does the board annually submit its needs and resource assessment as a basis for community-wide planning efforts?			
• Does the partnership update their Needs and Resource Assessment every three years?			
Does the local partnership work with local media?			
Did the local partnership participate in First Steps to the Statehouse?			
Did the local partnership contact its local legislators at least two additional times during the year?			
Does the local partnership have a vehicle (eNews, newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for maintaining contact with partners and supporters?			
Does the local partnership make presentations about First Steps to community groups?			
Does the local partnership have a website or social media that is updated regularly?			
Does the local partnership Executive Director or other staff members serve on at least two non-First Steps funded community/board task force(s) or advisory committee(s)?			
Does the local partnership collaborate with other community agencies in funding/implementing services to children and families?			
Resource Development			
1. Has the board developed and submitted a Resource Development Plan annually as part of the partnership's renewal plan?			
2. Does the board conduct fundraising activities in an ethical and fiscally responsible manner?			
• Has a written process been developed to address the handling and acknowledgement of contributions with respect to donor confidentiality requests?			
3. Does the local partnership accurately describe the purpose for fundraising activities?			
• Expel funds for the purpose they were submitted?			
• Maintain accounting segregation for restricted funds?			
• Raise funds in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal requirements?			
4. Does the board seek opportunities to collaborate with other partnerships and/or agencies/organizations to raise funds to meet the needs of at-risk children?			
5. Do the board and staff document in-kind contributions to the partnership in the format specified in the SCFS Operations Manual and provide timely submission of in-kind documentation to the RFM?			
Early Childhood Systems Development			
Does the local partnership evaluate its services activities and use the results to make future funding decisions?			
Does the local partnership use relevant county and/or state data to guide decisions about program changes and/or new programs?			
Does the local partnership have a process to collect and utilize information on community needs through an annual Needs and Resource Assessment?			
Is programmatic monitoring customized for each activity in order to ensure compliance with the contract?			

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