

Introduction

Per First Steps legislation (Section 52-152-70 (A)), each First Steps Partnership Board shall bring the community together to identify the area needs related to the goals of First Steps, develop a strategic long-term plan for meeting those needs, and then develop specific initiatives to implement the elements of the plan while integrating service delivery where possible. The partnership board is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the partnership's comprehensive strategic plan, which shall include direct service provision, contracting for service provision, and organization and management of volunteer programs. In addition, each partnership's comprehensive plan shall include the following core functions:

- a) service as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children;
- b) service as a community convener around the needs of preschool children and their families; and
- c) support of state-level school readiness priorities as determined by the State Board.

Needs and Resources Assessment: Each local First Steps partnership undergoes a community needs and resources assessment process every three years, in consultation with its local board, staff, clients and partners. A description of this process can be found online at <http://scfirststeps.com/fy-17-needs-and-resources-assessment/>.

Alignment to State First Steps Priorities: Each local First Steps partnership is a non-profit organization created in legislation in support of the statewide First Steps initiative, which is governed by a state board of trustees and supported by the State Office of First Steps. Each local plan aligns with the priorities of the South Carolina First Steps Strategic Plan, **Vision 2020** (<http://scfirststeps.com/resources-and-state-reporting/>). These priorities are:

- Increase access to quality early childhood programs and resources
- Enhance leadership development and capacity building
- Strengthen interagency accountability and public-private collaboration

Support for First Steps Legislative Goals: The strategic goals of this comprehensive plan support one or more goals of the First Steps initiative, as defined in state legislation (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c152.php>):

1. "Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
2. Increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
3. Promote high-quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
4. Provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
5. Mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed."

Promotion of South Carolina's Definition of School Readiness: The goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan promote one or more descriptions of school readiness (Ready Children, Ready Families and Caregivers, Ready Schools and Educators, Ready Communities) as defined in South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner (<http://www.ican.sc>), adopted in 2015 by the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees and the South Carolina Board of Education as the state's readiness benchmarks.

South Carolina's School Readiness Description (Profile of the Ready Kindergartner)

1 Ready Children

- 1A Approaches to Learning & Inquiry (10)
- 1B Emotional & Social Development (12)
- 1C Physical Development, Self-Help & Motor Skills (4)
- 1D Language & Literacy Development (24)
 - o Listening, Speaking and Understanding (8)
 - o Early Reading (12)
 - o Early Writing (4)
- 1E Mathematical Thinking (9)
 - o Number Sense (5)
 - o Matching, Sorting, Classifying (4)

2 Ready Families and Caregivers

Ready Kindergartners have the foundation of family and caregivers who:

- 2A Provide safe and loving home environments in which children can grow and develop optimally.
- 2B Ensure that their children's pediatric health and dental needs are regularly addressed.
- 2C Create "language rich" homes in which conversation and written literacy are modeled daily.
- 2D Ensure that their young children receive adequate rest and a healthy diet.
- 2E Expose young children to regular and varied learning experiences in and out of the home.

3 Ready Schools and Educators

Schools and educators for the Ready Kindergartner:

- 3A Understand that each child develops on a unique timeline.
- 3B Are prepared to meet the unique, individual needs of all students.
- 3C Are highly knowledgeable in both child development and the progression of early learning.
- 3D Provide the social, emotional and academic supports needed to advance their students abilities.
- 3E Create emotionally safe and nurturing environments that are free of stress.
- 3F Are equipped to support the needs of their students' parents and caregivers.

4 Ready Communities

Communities that support the Ready Kindergartner:

- 4A Provide access to the resources necessary to ensure good health and optimal physical, social/emotional and cognitive development.
- 4B Create environments in which children:
 - o Can grow and develop in the absence of fear, stress, danger and hunger.
 - o Have access to needed pediatric, dental and mental health resources.
 - o Spend their days in nurturing, language-rich, and developmentally supportive environments (whether a loving home, a high-quality early education setting or both).
 - o Are cared for by loving adults attentive to their physical, emotional and developmental needs.



Profile of the Ready Kindergartner brochure

Profile of the Ready Kindergartner brochures are available from each local First Steps office.

Profile of the Ready Kindergartner resources: <http://www.ican.sc/>

South Carolina's Definition of School Readiness (Section 59-152-25 (G))

"School readiness' means the level of child development necessary to ensure early school success as measured in the following domains: physical health and motor skills; emotional and social competence; language and literacy development; and mathematical thinking and cognitive skills. School readiness is supported by the knowledge and practices of families, caregivers, healthcare providers, educators, and communities."



Sumter County First Steps Partnership (SCFS) concentrates on strategies, which will improve school readiness in our county. We realize the significance early educational intervention can make in a child's readiness for school and lifetime success. Our strategies are centered around children, their families, and enhancing the skills and quality of those caring for the children, childcare providers.

For the past couple of months, SCFS Board Members have met and given a great deal of thought to where we are as a partnership to include our strengths, opportunities, strategies and areas we can further focus on our mission, "Cultivate, nurture and develop opportunities for children and families for success in school and life by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services".

Our programs, which we implement are Parent As Teachers, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Childcare Training and Scholarships/ABC Vouchers. In January of this year, we began implementing a new strategy Quality Enhancement/Coaching of Childcare Providers.

In order to have continued success, it's important to take an objective review of services and programs. While preparing our 2018-2020 Comprehensive Plan, we have had the opportunity to review all services and programs. The recent self-assessments of each program have validated our belief that we're investing our time and financials in the appropriate programs for Sumter County. The self-assessments have also allowed us to review areas where we can improve in each program.

We have been fortunate to have community partners who have collaborated with us to complement and enhance the programs we're implementing. A few of these community partners include, Sumter School District, Head Start, Early Head Start, BabyNet, Child Find, CDEEP, DSS, First Steps 4K and local childcare providers. We are truly appreciative for each our peer early education providers.

On March 15, 2018, SCFS Board met collectively to review and approve our 2020 Comprehensive Plan. This process has been beneficial to our board as we continue to be good stewards of the financial investment into the lives of our most vulnerable population and their future.

Board Chairman:
Earlene Walker-Kelly, Ph. D.

Executive Director:
Julia A. Nelson, MPA

Sumter County First Steps Contact Information:
220 Hasel Street, Sumter SC 29150; Post Office Box 2331, Sumter, SC. 29151
Telephone: 803.464.1224 Fax: 803.774.5610
Email: sumterfirststeps@gmail.com

Vision, Mission, and Values

Source: *Guiding Principles and Best Practices for South Carolina Nonprofits, 4th Edition* (TogetherSC, 2017)
<http://www.togethersc.org/?page=GPBP>

In order to engage in strategic thinking that steers the organization in a **mission-focused direction**, the local partnership board must clearly define its mission, vision and values and use these statements to guide planning and action.

Mission and vision statements capture the essence of your organization's beliefs and values, and define its place in the world. A **vision statement** explains the overall goal of your organization looking into the future, while the **mission statement** outlines the present plan to realize the vision.

VISION

Communicates the desired future we seek for the community we serve.

SC First Steps Vision 2020 Vision Statement

Every South Carolina child will be prepared for success in school.

- The partnership board adopts the following vision statement for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan:

Sumter County First Steps Vision Statement

Sumter County First Steps will collaborate with other entities to cultivate and develop, our children and families to **prepare children for school success** and life.

MISSION

Describes the purpose that guides everything we do.

SC First Steps Vision 2020 Mission Statement

Collaborating with other entities, First Steps helps South Carolina families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.

- The partnership board adopts the following mission statement for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan:

Sumter County First Steps Mission Statement

Sumter County First Steps will cultivate, nurture and develop opportunities for children and families for success in school and life by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.

VALUES

Core values and beliefs reflect how our people – and the organization itself – behaves.

South Carolina and Sumter County First Steps Vision 2020 Core 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.

- The partnership board adopts the SC First Steps Vision 2020 core values for its 2018-2020 Strategic Plan

STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic goals set the direction for how the organization intends to implement its mission and address the needs of its focus population(s) for the duration of the plan.

#	Sumter County First Steps Strategic Goals, 2018-2020	FS Legislative Goal(s) Addressed (abbreviate as Goal 1, 2, etc.)	Profile of the Ready Kindergartner Benchmark(s) Addressed (abbreviate as 1A, 2B, etc.)
1	Parent As Teachers	1, 2, & 3	1A, 1B, 1D 2A, 2C, 2E
2	Imagination Library	1	1D, 2C,
3	Child Care Training	3 & 4	1A, 1B, 1C, 1D
4	Quality Enhancement	3 & 4	1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 2A, 2E
5	Scholarships	1, 3 & 4	1A, 2E,

Sumter County First Steps Partnership

2018-2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Organized by the partnership’s current and proposed programs and services, as well as the core functions common to all First Steps partnerships (serving as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to services; serving as a community convener in support of the needs of preschool children and their families; and supporting state readiness priorities).

Local Portal			
Sumter First Steps will connect families of preschool children to services designed to strengthen families and promote optimal child development (State Priority: Core Function).			
Objective	In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)	Success Metrics	Action Items
Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i> : 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration		Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)	Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)

Community Education and Outreach

Sumter First Steps will increase understanding in the community of school readiness domains and assessment, and “what works” to help young children succeed, and will make information easily accessible in all communities and for all families. (State Priority: SCFS Strategic Plan)

<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i>: 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Success Metrics</p> <p>Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action Items</p> <p>Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen community education and outreach 	<p>1,2,3,4, & 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Documenting participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a pool of volunteers ▪ Maintain active membership with Child Find Interagency to further promote awareness of First Steps by networking with Wateree Head Start, Early Head Start, CDEEP, Crosswell Children’s Home, Sumter County DSN, Shaw Air Force Base (Exceptional Family Members Program – Special Needs, Sumter BabyNet, Sumter School District, SC School for Deaf and Blind, DSS, About Play, Child Find and First Steps 4K providers ▪ Share and distribute programmatic information about First Steps with the above organizations and to include local churches, pediatric practices, etc. ▪ Track referral connections

Mobilizing Communities on Providing Enhanced Services to Support Families and their Young Children

Sumter First Steps will serve as a community convener to address the needs of preschool children in the community, in support of state readiness priorities (State Priority: Core Function).

<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i>: 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Success Metrics</p> <p>Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action Items</p> <p>Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate with existing community conveners in early education to address the needs of preschool children in the community 	<p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3,4 & 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of participation and contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain active membership with Child Find Interagency for networking opportunities with Wateree Head Start, Early S, CDEEP, Crosswell Children’s Home, Sumter County DSN, Shaw Air Force Base (Exceptional Family Members Program – Special Needs, Sumter BabyNet, Sumter School District, SC School for Deaf and Blind, DSS, About Play, Child Find and First Steps 4K providers ▪ Share programmatic information about First Steps with the above organizations and to include local churches, pediatric practices, etc.

Parent As Teachers, Scholarships and Dolly Parton Imagination Library

Description: Parent As Teachers is an evidence based home visitation program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed.

Scholarships are actually ABC vouchers from DSS, which provide an opportunity for quality childcare.

Dolly Parton Imagination Library provides an age appropriate book monthly to children age birth to 5 years. It is operated by the Dollywood Foundation.

Integration: SCFS PAT program is contracted with Sumter School District. The school district has the needed infrastructure and support to successfully implement the program. The parent educators have worked with PAT for a number of years with vast knowledge of the program.

Collaboration: The collaborating partners for our PAT, Scholarships and Dolly Parton Imaginations strategies include: Sumter School District, which implement our PAT and Scholarship strategies, along with Early Head Start, Head Start, and Child Find. First Steps 4-K centers are also provided an opportunity to collaborate with Dolly Parton Imagination Library

Objective	In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)	Success Metrics Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)	Action Items Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)
Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i> : 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration			
Increase the number of children participating in Dolly Parton Imagination Library from the annually served 135 to 175 served per year by the end of 2020.	1	Evidence of success with this strategy will be provided by the number of children enrolled in Dolly Parton Imagination Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broaden awareness and form more partnerships with other agencies, which serve children within the same age range.
Increase the number of certified parent educators to build the capacity to serve more families with PAT by the end of 2020.	1,2,3	Evidence of achievement for this objective will be evident when additional certified parent educators have been hired and the number of additional families served increases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our partnership has a list of individuals interested in serving as a Parent Educator. SCFS will seek training opportunities from PAT National Trainings.
Increase the number of families receiving Scholarships/ABC Vouchers from 14 to 20 by the end of	1,3,4	Evidence of success with this strategy will be evident with the number of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our scholarship strategy is directly integrated with PAT. Once additional parent educators are hired, the caseload number will increase

2020.		Scholarship/ABC vouchers being awarded	providing for the opportunity of more families needing Scholarships/ABC Vouchers.
-------	--	---	--

Childcare Training and QE

Description: Childcare Training: Efforts to improve the quality of childcare include providing affordable, high quality training that meet the needs of the local childcare workforce. Concentration in the following areas: nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration.

Quality Enhancement of Childcare Centers: Efforts to improve and enhance the quality of childcare centers by providing technical assistance/coaching to upgrade their DSS rating as a center.

Integration: Childcare training and Quality Enhancement are both integrated on a limited scale. Participants in our childcare trainings have the opportunity to apply and participate with QE to receive technical assistance/coaching.

Collaboration: The collaborating partners for both strategies include local childcare providers, CCCCD and technical assistance from the State Office as needed.

<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>Each objective addresses one or more priorities of the SC First Steps Strategic Plan, <i>Vision 2020</i>: 1) Increase access; 2) Build capacity; 3) Strengthen interagency accountability & collaboration</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In Support of Partnership Strategic Goal(s) (abbreviate as 1, 2, etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Success Metrics</p> <p>Evidence for demonstrating progress, or achievement, of this objective (assessments, surveys, evaluations, focus groups, or other documentation)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action Items</p> <p>Major activities to be initiated in support of the objective (to be operationalized by staff and partners)</p>
<p>Increase the number of centers participating in QE from 2 to 4 (pending funding) by the end of 2020.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3 & 4</p>	<p>Achievement of this goal will be evident by the increase in the number of childcare providers participating and QE.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seeking additional funding for QE and prioritizing this strategy during the annual budgeting process.
<p>Collaborating with other early education providers to coordinate quality training opportunities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1,3,4 & 5</p>	<p>Achievement of this goal will be assessed by surveys of partners with the Child Find Interagency Partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborate with members of the Child Find Interagency Council to seek opportunities to coordinate quality training opportunities.