



Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Thursday, June 18, 2026, 2-4 PM, Virtual

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82892094043>

AGENDA

- I. Roll Call Emily Prillaman, Board Liaison

- II. Public Comment Period

The public is invited to provide comments relevant to the South Carolina First Steps and/or SC Early Childhood Advisory Council during this period. Members of the public wishing to speak must sign up before the meeting. Comments should be limited to no more than three minutes per speaker.

- III. Call to Order and Approve the Agenda David Morley, Chairman

Motion: To adopt the agenda as submitted

- IV. Consent Agenda Chairman Morley

Motion: To adopt the consent agenda as submitted

 - a. To adopt the Board of Trustees meeting minutes from March 19, 2026.
 - b. To approve minutes from the Executive Committee Meeting May 26, April 3, April 27, and June 5, 2026.
 - c. To approve changes to the Local Partnership Scholarship Guidelines for FY26-27 as recommended by the Local Partnership and Grants Committee on May 26, 2026.
 - d. To approve the FY26-27 Local Partnership Proposed Programs as recommended by the Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee on May 26, 2026.
 - e. To approve recommendations for FY26-27 Formula, READY and Innovation Investment awards by the Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee on May 26, 2026.
 - f. To approve all budgets in alignment with the award amount, legislative requirements, and fiscal and operational guidelines, except for Barnwell, Darlington, Florence, Georgetown, Lancaster and Marion, as recommended by the Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee on June 9, 2026.
 - g. To have Child Trends investigate the effects of pre-literacy enhancements on parenting programs for the 2022-2026 evaluation, as recommended by the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee on May 27, 2026
 - h. To receive the annual audit report draft ending June 30, 2025, and the 2025 990 draft as presented, with resolution of miscellaneous questions and typographical corrections, as recommended by the Finance and Administration Committee on May 14, 2026

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| V. | Executive Committee Report | Chairman Morley |
| VI. | Program and Grants Committee Report | Wes Wooten, Committee Chair |
| VII. | Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Report | Dr. Amy Williams, Committee Chair |
| VIII. | Finance and Administration Committee Report | Jesica Mackey, Committee Chair |
| IX. | Legislative Report | Senator Greg Hembree |
| X. | Proposed 26-27 LP Formula Funding Allocations | Kerry Cordan, Ph.D., Chief Partnership Officer |
| XI. | Executive Session for Proposed Corrective Action Plan | Chairman Morley |
| XII. | Other Corrective Action Updates | |
| XIII. | Agency Director Report | Ann Vandervliet |
| XIV. | Adjournment | Chairman Morley |

Motion: To adjourn the meeting of the SC First Steps Board of Trustees

Attachments:

- SC First Steps Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – March 19, 2026
- Executive Committee Minutes – April 3, 2026
- Executive Committee Minutes – April 27, 2026
- Executive Committee Minutes – May 26, 2026
- Executive Committee Minutes – June 5, 2026
- Local Partnership and Grants Committee Meeting Minutes – May 26, 2026
- Local Partnership and Grants Committee Meeting Minutes – June 9, 2026
- Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Report
- Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Meeting Minutes – May 27, 2026
- Finance and Administration Committee Report
- Finance and Administration Committee Meeting Minutes – May 14, 2026
- Legislative Report

Special thanks to John Hayes and Dr. Robert Bank for their service on the SC First Steps Board of Trustees!

Welcome to Dr. Brannon Traxler, Interim Director of Department of Public Health!



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 19, 2026

636 Rosewood or Virtual (via Zoom)

Trustees Present (12): Frances Brown Anderson, Dr. Robert Bank, Anthony Cantone, Jacque Curtin, Mary Lynne Diggs, Dr. James Durant, Jack McBride, Dave Morley (Chair), Roger Pryor, Dr. Edward Simmer, Sue Williams, Wes Wooten

Trustees Absent (10): Rep. Terry Alexander, Sen. Jason Elliott, Rep. Shannon Erickson, John Hayes, Sen. Greg Hembree, Constance Holloway, Jesica Mackey, Eunice Medina, Ellen Weaver, Dr. Amy Williams

Others Present (86): Rita Allison, Emika Aroh, Lauren Austin, Amanda Bailey, Gina Beebe, Althea Benson, Amber Bishop, Michelle Bowers, Salandra Bowman, Monica Branton-Pearson, Kippie Brown, John Browne, Tekethia Burrell, Dr. Crystal Campbell, Ashlyn Cobia, Beryl Collington, Kerry Cordan, Sarah Crawford, Dr. Taylor Dee, Linda Doherty, Paul Dowsakul, Robin Ebert, Sheneka Edens, Elliott Epps, Senekita Farmer, Jessica Fluker, Robin Frasier, Stephen Gilchrist, Caroline Goins, Rachal Hatton-Moore, Dorothy Henderson, Kenna Hoover, Samantha Ingram, Kiani J, Kristine Jenkins, Makayla Jones, Angelica Jules, Rosaland Kenner, Janice Kilburn, Deloris Knight, Candi Lalonde, Tamiko Lewis, David Lisk, Karen Martini-Waller, Kristen Martocchio, A Matthews, Joy Mazur, Shica McConner, Ivory Mitchell, Beth Moore, Marcia Nash, Nhi Ngo, Katie Nichols, Tami Nix, David O'Kelly, Karen Oliver, Kaylee Osbon, LaVonda Paul, Shayla Pettigrew, Alexis D. Pipkins, Duchett Polite, Dorothy Priester, Emily Prillaman, Marilyn Pyatt, Austin Reed, Kate Roach, Connie Rouse, Kathy Sanders, LaMyra Sanders, Olivia Sapier, Talisha Scott, Ashlee Simpkins, Martha Strickland, Molly Tuck, Molly Tuck, BJ Tucker, Katrina Valliere, Ann Vandervliet, Angela Walker, Betty Washington, Patti Wilkes, Anita Williams, Taylor Windell, Jade Wright, Tomeiko Wright, Baylis Wright

Meeting was called to order with a quorum present at 2:11 p.m. by Mr. Dave Morley.

Alexis D. Pipkins spoke during the public comment period. He asked if policies adopted by the Executive Committee need to go before the full board, as well as whether local partnerships are considered nonprofits or political subdivisions. He addressed how the compensation policies approved by the Executive Committee do not acknowledge level of education and asked for input at the local level.

A motion was made to accept the meeting agenda by Wes Wooten, seconded by Tony Catone. All voted in favor.

A motion was made to accept the consent agenda by Roger Pryor, seconded by Tony Catone. All voted in favor.

Chairman Morley gave an update from the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee has been working to ensure compliance with Act 81 and update procurement policies. Personnel policies are still being created.

Wes Wooten gave an update from the Program and Grants Committee. The committee approved changes to the SCFS Program Guidelines. Kerry Cordan, Chief Partnership Officer, added that the Comprehensive Grant Application is out. The review process will consider prior year performance, use of data to drive decision making, accurate and strategic budgeting, and degree and approach for collaboration.

David O'Kelly, Chief Financial Officer, shared that the Formula Funding allocations were reviewed and approved for FY2026-2027. The audit report will be issued March 31st. The Local Partnership Financial System Implementation of SAGE is on track for set up, migration, training, and launch this spring. First Steps has spent 65.6% of its budget, making it on pace for the year. Mr. Morley asked Mr. O'Kelly to summarize the benefits of SAGE. He responded that it was more efficient, and early tests show that Local Partnerships find it intuitive and useful. Ann Vandervliet, Agency Director, commended the staff for the transition and their level of collaboration.

Government Liaison, Elliott Epps, gave the legislative report on behalf of Senator Greg Hembree. First Steps submitted budget proposals, and the state budget process will continue through May. First Steps will host a Legislative Breakfast on May 13th for members of the House and Senate. Mr. Epps and Ms. Vandervliet met with Representative Neil Collins about transferring funding for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program from the SC Department of Education to SCFS. Mr. Morley shared that one of the benefits of DPIL expansion is money for other programming. Ms. Vandervliet gave thanks to the partnership with legislators.

Molly Tuck, Director of Research and Evaluation, gave a presentation on the predictive power of SC's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). There is a strong relationship between outcomes on the KRA and 3rd Grade READY achievement. Internal research from SC Research and Evaluation showed that high dosages of either PAT or HIPPY, combined with FS 4K, were associated with children being up to 9 times more likely to demonstrate readiness. Mary Lynne Diggs asked whether there were efforts to include the founders of PAT in the pilot with the Department of Social Services (DSS). Ms. Vandervliet responded that they are exploring collaboration across agencies. Tony Catone, Director of DSS, added that they are trying to bring in new funders and utilize federally matched dollars, a partnership modeled after SCFS was already doing. Ms. Tuck gave an update that the new internal data system management program, Caseworthy, will go live July 1st.

Ann Vandervliet, agency director, presented "First Steps 4K: Then and Now." First Steps is now testing different doses of CLASS coaching and training to determine the intensity of support needed to raise instructional support among 4K teachers. By reducing some administrative requirements, First Steps increased on-site coaching in 4K classrooms. The 26-27 4K site contracts will require directors to report on teacher and assistant turnover in the new data system, so First Steps will be able to gain understanding of causes. Additional quality improvement tactics may be needed to strengthen the approach to individual and group training and strengthen the criteria used for 4K provider selection.

Ms. Vandervliet gave a quarterly update. First Steps hosted *Early Advantage: Foundations for South Carolina's Economic Vitality* in partnership with the SC Department of Education and the SC Department of Employment and Workforce. First Steps is implementing a new financial management system, SAGE, and a new internal data system, CaseWorthy. First Steps received a \$2.25M grant from the Leon Levine Foundation to implement a relationship-based continuum of birth to five services pilot within Chesterfield, Darlington, and Marlboro Counties for three years.

Mr. Morley asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting. Wes Wooten made the motion to adjourn the meeting of the SC First Steps Board of Trustees, seconded by Jack McBride. All voted in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:17 p.m.



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

April 3, 2026

Virtual (via Zoom)

Members Present (4): Dave Morley, Dr. Amy Williams, Wes Wooten, Jesica Mackey

Staff Present: Ann Vandervliet, David O'Kelly, Kerry Cordan, Ph.D., Robin Ebert

Dave Morley called the meeting to order with a quorum present at 9:04 a.m.

Ann Vandervliet gave an overview of the proposed *Local Partnership Fiscal and Operational Guidelines*. The Executive Committee then discussed policies related to budget, credit cards, dual employment, employee incentives, endowments, executive director employment, financial reports, office space, other funds, outside employment, promotional items, and timekeeping.

Dave Morley asked if there was a motion to approve the proposed changes to *Local Partnership Fiscal and Operational Guidelines*, with requested edits, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Dr. Amy Williams made the motion, seconded by Wes Wooten, all voted in favor.

Ann Vandervliet gave an overview of the *Countdown to Kindergarten* applications. Seventeen proposals were received. Kerry Cordan answered questions about the application and scoring. Dave Morley asked for a motion to approve thirteen CTK awards and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Dr. Williams made the motion, seconded by Wes Wooten, all voted in favor.

Dave Morley asked for a motion to enter executive session for the purpose of discussion of the ED compensation request from Greenville County and a local partnership personnel matter. The motion was made by Wes Wooten, seconded by Dr. Williams, all voted in favor.

With no action taken in executive session, a motion to exit executive session was made by Wes Wooten, seconded by Dr. Williams, all voted in favor.

Wes Wooten made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dr. Williams, all voted in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2026

Virtual (via Zoom)

Members Present: Dave Morley, Dr. Amy Williams, Wes Wooten

Members Absent: Jessica Mackey

Staff Present: Ann Vandervliet, David O'Kelly, Kerry Cordan, Ph.D.

Others Present: Alexis D. Pipkins

Dave Morley called the meeting to order with a quorum present at 11:01 a.m.

Dave Morley asked for a motion to enter executive session for the discussion of compensation requests from Beaufort County, Berkeley County, Cherokee County, Chesterfield County, Dorchester County, Fairfield County, Greenville County, Jasper County, Lancaster County, Lee County, McCormick County, and Williamsburg County. The motion was made by Dr. Amy Williams, seconded by Wes Wooten, all voted in favor.

With no action taken in executive session, a motion to exit executive session was made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Wes Wooten, all voted in favor.

Upon leaving executive session, the following actions were taken:

Dr. Williams made the motion to approve the Fairfield County First Steps, Greenville County First Steps, and McCormick County First Steps executive director compensation requests, as submitted by the local partnership board, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Wes Wooten seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Dr. Williams made the motion not to approve the Cherokee County First Steps and Chesterfield County First Steps executive director compensation requests, as submitted by the local partnership board, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Wes Wooten seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Dr. Williams made the motion to approve, with edits, the Beaufort County First Steps, Berkeley County First Steps, Dorchester County First Steps, Jasper County First Steps, Lancaster County First Steps, Lee County First Steps, and Williamsburg County First Steps executive director compensation requests and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Wes Wooten seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Dave Morley made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dr. Williams, all voted in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2027

Virtual (via Zoom)

Members Present: Dave Morley, Wes Wooten, Jesica Mackey

Members Absent: Dr. Amy Williams

Staff Present: Ann Vandervliet, David O'Kelly, Kerry Cordan, Ph.D.

Dave Morley called the meeting to order with a quorum present at 4:31 p.m.

Dave Morley asked for a motion to enter executive session for the discussion of hiring and compensation of Interim Executive Directors for York and Chester County First Steps. The motion was made by Wes Wooten and seconded by Jesica Mackey.

With no action taken in executive session, a motion to exit executive session was made by Wes Wooten, seconded by Jesica Mackey, all voted in favor.

Upon leaving executive session, the following action was taken:

Jesica Mackey made the motion to approve the proposed local partnership Interim ED and compensation for both York and Chester Counties, as submitted by the local partnership board, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Wes Wooten seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Dave Morley made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jesica Mackey, all voted in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:47.



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

June 5, 2026, 9 AM

Virtual

Members Present: Dave Morley, Wes Wooten, Jessica Mackey

Members Absent: Dr. Amy Williams

Staff Present: Ann Vandervliet, David O'Kelly, Kerry Cordan, Ph.D.

Dave Morley called the meeting to order with a quorum present at 9:01 a.m.

Dave Morley asked for a motion to enter executive session for the discussion of an Executive Director compensation request, ED compensation appeals, ED bonus reviews, and corrective action updates. The motion was made by Wes Wooten and seconded by Jessica Mackey.

With no action taken in executive session, a motion to exit executive session was made by Jessica Mackey, seconded by Dave Morley, all voted in favor.

Upon leaving executive session, the following action was taken:

Jessica Mackey made the motion to approve the proposed Edgefield County First Steps, Beaufort County First Steps, and Lee County First Steps Executive Director compensation requests, as submitted by the local partnership board, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Wes Wooten seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Wes Wooten made the motion to approve the proposed Berkeley County First Steps and Lancaster County First Steps Executive Director compensation appeals, with modifications, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Jessica Mackey seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Wes Wooten made the motion to not approve the proposed Dorchester County First Steps Executive Director compensation appeal, as submitted by the local partnership board, and to take this action on behalf of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina First Steps due to the urgency of the matter. Jessica Mackey seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Ann Vandervliet gave an Agency update. First Steps is hosting in-person, small-group trainings across the state for 4K teachers, assistants, and coaches. The 4K Operational Guidelines and Classroom Guidelines were updated to align with 4K refinement strategies. Coaching next year will move from compliance monitoring to CLASS-driven Quality Improvement Plans based on fall observational scores. First Steps has completed agreements with CareSouth for HealthySteps as part of the First Five PeeDee Pilot. As the new Interim Director of the SC Department of Public Health, Dr. Brannon Traxler will join the SC Board of Trustees. If the expansion funding for 4K is approved, eligibility will change from 185% FPL to 300% FPL. This means that 14,000 new children will be eligible. There is also \$500,000 in that funding to implement a 4K refinement pilot with the SC Department of Education. A Chief of Early Learning position has been created to support continuous quality improvement with 4K classrooms

Jessica Mackey made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Wes Wooten, all voted in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.



Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee

May 26, 2026, 1:00PM

Virtual

Members Present: Wes Wooten, John Hayes, Jack McBride, Roger Pryor

Staff Present: Ann Vandervliet, Kerry Cordan, Gina Beebe, Kate Roach, LaMyra Sanders-Dukes, Jade Wright, Jessica Fluker, Lexi Jones, Janice Kilburn, Betty Gardiner, Kathy Fitzgerald

Wes Wooten called the meeting to order with quorum present at 1:01 p.m.

Kate Roach, Director of Local Partnership Professional Development, presented revisions to the Scholarship Guidelines for FY26-27. Jack McBride made a motion to approve the changes as presented, seconded by Roger Pryor, all voted in favor.

Roger Pryor made a motion to change the language in item number 2 of the “Proposed Guideline Changes.” John Hayes seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Language approved to be added to the general program guidelines section of the FY26-27 Program Guidelines:

Eligible children may receive child care scholarships funded and administered by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS). First Steps Local Partnerships may assist families in connecting to the DSS scholarship program.

To qualify, parents or caregivers must:

- Be actively enrolled in a direct-service, high-intensity, evidence-based program with the Local Partnership
- Meet all program dosage requirements.
- Complete an age-appropriate developmental screening for the participating child within the first 90 days of scholarship enrollment.

Kerry Cordan, Chief Partnership Officer, presented the FY26-27 Local Partnership Proposed Programs. Roger Pryor made the motion to approve the programs, seconded by John Hayes and all voted in favor.

Kerry Cordan presented the FY26-27 Local Partnership Competitive Grant Funding Recommendations. Jack McBride made the motion to approve the recommendations for the 2026-27 Formula, READY, and Innovation grants, as recommended by South Carolina First Steps staff, contingent upon Innovation Investment funding provided by the General Assembly and approval of the local partnership’s budgets, and with the stipulation that local partnerships must be in good standing and not on active corrective action at the time of the award. John Hayes seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

There will be a special meeting in June to discuss Local Partnership revised budgets for FY26-27.



Wes Wooten made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jack McBride, all voted in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

FORMULA AND DISCRETIONARY FUNDING AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2026-27



Formula Allocation

READY Funding: Continuing and New Awards

Innovation Investment Funding: New Awards

For Program and Grants Committee Approval, May 2026

Background

Starting with the FY2022-23 fiscal year, SC First Steps has received funding from the General Assembly for targeted and competitive grants to local partnerships. For FY2026-2027, SCFS has requested \$5,000,000* from the General Assembly for the continuation and expansion of Innovation Investments: additional, one-time funding specifically targeting multi-county partnerships. These funding opportunities are in addition to the annual formula allocation.

Formula (Annual State Allocation)

The Formula Allocation is the annual amount each partnership receives through the approved allocation model based on the American Community Survey population estimates for each county. Formula allocation submissions were reviewed for compliance to SC State Law, Program and Operational guidelines, Finance Operational guidelines, and minimum qualifications.

READY (Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth)

Recurring funding of \$3 million annually in General Funds, of which at least 97% (\$2.91 million) is to be awarded by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees to local partnerships through competitive and targeted grants. The purpose of these funds is to prioritize evidence-based programs for children birth through age three, who live in rural communities and in communities where kindergarten readiness scores are consistently below the state rate. No more than 10% of appropriated READY funds may be distributed to any one county. Additional READY funding priorities for FY26-27 included the expansion of child- or family-focused programs in the parenting, health, and early care and education program areas.

For FY27, SC First Steps has a total of **\$3,126,378** in available READY funding (\$2,910,000 in READY funding, and at least \$216,378 in carryforward or other funding) with which to award READY grants.

Innovation Investment Funding (NEW)

For FY26-27, SCFS anticipates **\$5,000,000*** in one-time (non-recurring) funding to incentivize counties initiating and/or sustaining formal partnerships with one or more other local partnerships through blended funding. Additional Innovation Investment funding (\$555,059) will be provided from carryforward and other funding sources. Funding is competitive with no geographic cap encourages more advanced collaboration between clusters of counties.

Requests for Innovation Investments must have clearly defined how partners will share costs, reduce administrative burden and increase reach for at least one evidence based and high intensity program or service. Strategies for this funding must serve a minimum of 50

*FY27 budget has not been approved by the Legislature as of May 26,2026

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additional children, parents or families (whatever is the most appropriate unit of measure). The proposed service and/or program must also have strong technical assistance available at the state and/or national level.

For FY26-27, Innovation Investment focus areas are:

- Parenting education and home visiting (priority: PAT and HIPPIY)
- Early Care and Education with parenting (priority: LEAP for K with Parenting)
- Health

Application and Selection Process

Local partnerships applied for FY26-27 funding via the Comprehensive Grant Application, through which they were to request all state funding from SC First Steps: Formula funding, READY funding, and Innovation Investment funding. Each local partnership submitted a narrative and proposed budget that described its local early childhood system, current level of impact, operational capacity, and FY26-27 funding request. Each application was scored by a three-person reviewer panel comprised of SC First Steps staff. Local partnerships were also assessed for compliance in both program and fiscal performance.

A total of 33 local partnerships requested **READY** funding and of those 10 requested funding for more than one program. Of these, two partnerships are not eligible at present due to corrective action. The 31 eligible applications for READY funding totaled \$4,144,613 in requests, which is \$1,108,235 more than the amount of READY funding available to award. Awards were based on quality of application including clear demonstration of expansion of services above formula-funded capacity. The grant review team has also provided suggested reductions from requested award amounts based on unit costs for program delivery. Five requests were deemed ineligible due to program selection that was not in the priority areas or was not child-focused.

Twelve local partnerships submitted **Innovation Investment** requests as lead partners totaling \$8,009,415. Four of these local partnerships requested Innovation Investment funding for 2 programs.

Each Innovation request was reviewed in-depth by three SCFS staff members, and additional input was gathered from Program Officers and the Director of Innovation. Scores were based on: clear descriptions of administrative leads and supporting partnerships roles, budgets alignment with grant requirements, demonstration of recruitment and retention of clients and staff, and priority program selection. The grant review team has provided suggested reductions from requested award amounts based on unit costs for program delivery and scaling of programs.

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Summary of Innovation Investment Proposals Recommended for Funding

Allendale*, Bamberg, and Barnwell Counties

Program(s): Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) and LEAP for K

Description: Allendale, Bamberg, and Barnwell counties will implement the HIPPY program, combine administrative costs and support new staff to serve at least 76 families in the three counties.

Allendale is also planning to expand their LEAP for K program in collaboration with the Allendale school district and the Barnwell school district to serve at least 91 children.

Anderson* and Greenville Counties

Program(s): HealthySteps

Description: HealthySteps has operated at Prisma Powdersville pediatric clinic for several years. In collaboration with Prisma, Anderson will partner with Greenville County to sustain and expand HealthySteps. In addition to service expansion in the clinic, the local partnerships will receive referrals from the clinic for parenting and other services that may benefit the clinic families.

Berkeley*, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

Program(s): HealthySteps

Description: HealthySteps has operated at 2 MUSC Pediatric clinics for several years. In collaboration with MUSC, this project will continue to support referrals within Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester counties. HealthySteps will expand with the addition of another clinic site and an additional HealthySteps Specialist. In addition to service expansion in the clinics, Berkeley is also committed to serving the tri-county area with Parents as Teachers as an outreach of HealthySteps.

Darlington*, Chesterfield, and Marlboro Counties

Program(s): Parents as Teachers (PAT)

Description: Darlington, Chesterfield, and Marlboro counties will implement the PAT program, combine administrative costs and support new staff to serve at least 28 families in the three Counties.

Greenville*, Anderson, Laurens, Pickens, and Oconee Counties

Program(s): Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

Description: Greenville*, Anderson, Laurens, Pickens, and Oconee counties will implement the HIPPY program, combine administrative costs and support new staff to serve at least 190 families in the five counties.

Greenwood* and McCormick Counties

Program(s): Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

Description: Greenwood and McCormick counties will implement the HIPPY program, combine administrative costs and support new staff to serve at least 55 families in the two counties.

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Jasper*, Beaufort and Hampton Counties

Program(s): Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

Description: Jasper, Beaufort and Hampton Counties will implement the HIPPY program, combine administrative costs and support new staff to serve at least 70 families in the three counties.

Spartanburg*, Cherokee, and Union Counties

Program(s): Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

Description: Spartanburg, Cherokee, and Union counties will implement the HIPPY program, combine administrative costs and support new staff to serve at least 96 families in the three counties.

Program(s): HealthySteps

Description: Spartanburg, Cherokee, and Union counties will establish HealthySteps at 3 new clinic sites in collaboration with ReGenesis Healthcare through the support of 2 HealthySteps Specialists. In addition to services in the clinic, the three local partnerships will receive referrals from the clinic for parenting and other services that may benefit the clinic families.

Williamsburg* and Georgetown Counties

Program(s): Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

Description: Williamsburg and Georgetown counties will implement the HIPPY program, combine administrative costs and support new staff to serve at least 85 families in the two counties.

Program(s): Parents as Teachers (PAT)

Description: Williamsburg and Georgetown counties will implement the PAT program, combine administrative costs and support new staff to serve at least 92 families in the two counties.

Table 1 below provides the allocated amounts for formula funding, the recommended amounts for new READY funding, and the recommended amounts for Innovation Investment funding.

All awards are contingent upon the following:

1. Innovation funding from the General Assembly in the amount requested (\$5,000,000).
2. Submission of revised budgets from the local partnership that meet legislative and LP fiscal and Operational Guidelines requirements by June 8.
3. Approval of the local partnership budget by the SCFS Program and Grants Committee of the Board of Trustees.

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TABLE 1: Formula, READY and Innovation Investment Funding Proposal for FY26-27

	Formula Allocation	Recommended READY Award	Recommended Innovation Investment Award	TOTAL
Abbeville	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
Aiken	\$ 405,112.00			\$ 405,112.00
Allendale	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 38,010.00	\$ 559,785.00	\$ 819,963.00
Anderson	\$ 502,416.00		\$ 152,250.00	\$ 654,666.00
Bamberg	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 63,901.00		\$ 286,069.00
Barnwell	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
Beaufort	\$ 431,268.00	\$ 104,024.00		\$ 535,292.00
Berkeley	\$ 546,947.00	\$ 96,438.00	\$ 792,576.00	\$ 1,183,961.00
Calhoun	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 48,377.00		\$ 270,545.00
Charleston	\$ 758,615.00	\$ 210,000.00		\$ 968,615.00
Cherokee	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 72,315.00		\$ 294,483.00
Chester	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
Chesterfield	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 175,324.00		\$ 397,492.00
Clarendon	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 30,000.00		\$ 252,168.00
Colleton	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 72,492.00		\$ 294,660.00
Darlington	\$ 222,168.00		\$ 200,000.00	\$ 422,168.00
Dillon	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 249,469.00		\$ 471,637.00
Dorchester	\$ 299,466.00	\$ 173,181.00		\$ 472,647.00
Edgefield	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 5,000.00		\$ 227,168.00
Fairfield	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 28,000.00		\$ 250,168.00
Florence	\$ 424,610.00	\$ 170,543.00		\$ 595,153.00
Georgetown	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
Greenville	\$ 1,289,245.00	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 1,110,895.00	\$ 2,435,140.00
Greenwood	\$ 255,376.00	\$ 70,972.00	\$ 296,927.00	\$ 623,275.00
Hampton	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
Horry	\$ 686,744.00			\$ 686,744.00
Jasper	\$ 222,168.00		\$ 455,000.00	\$ 677,168.00
Kershaw	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 75,000.00		\$ 297,168.00
Lancaster	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 175,000.00		\$ 397,168.00
Laurens	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
Lee	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 272,659.00		\$ 494,827.00
Lexington	\$ 745,050.00	\$ 273,000.00		\$ 1,018,050.00
Marion	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
Marlboro	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
McCormick	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 54,447.00		\$ 276,615.00
Newberry	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 35,000.00		\$ 257,168.00
Oconee	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 22,000.00		\$ 244,168.00

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	Formula Allocation	Recommended READY Award	Recommended Innovation Investment Award	TOTAL
Orangeburg	\$ 250,341.00	\$ 30,400.00		\$ 280,741.00
Pickens	\$ 228,848.00	\$ 100,000.00		\$ 328,848.00
Richland	\$ 1,071,539.00			\$ 1,071,539.00
Saluda	\$ 222,168.00			\$ 222,168.00
Spartanburg	\$ 885,406.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 693,626.00	\$ 1,639,032.00
Sumter	\$ 323,376.00	\$ 150,000.00		\$ 473,376.00
Union	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 35,826.00		\$ 257,994.00
Williamsburg	\$ 222,168.00	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 1,294,000.00	\$ 1,716,168.00
York	\$ 487,997.00			\$ 487,997.00
TOTAL	\$ 16,035,228.00	\$ 3,126,378.00	\$ 5,555,059.00	\$ 24,716,665.00

FY26-27 Local Partnership Proposed Program Strategies from all Funding Sources

Abbeville

Parents as Teachers

Aiken

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Coaching
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Identification and Referral

Allendale

Nurturing Parenting
HIPPY
LEAP for K

Anderson

Raising a Reader
Triple P Level 4
HIPPY
Reach Out and Read
3K Support
Countdown to Kindergarten
Countdown to 4K
HealthySteps

Bamberg

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY

Barnwell

HIPPY
3K Support

Beaufort

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY
Reach Out and Read
Child Care Coaching
Child Care Training
Early Identification and Referral (PASOs)

Berkeley

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Coaching
Child Care Training
HealthySteps

Calhoun

Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten

Charleston

Parents as Teachers
Triple P Level 4
Motherread/Fatheread
Child Care Coaching
Child Care Training

Cherokee

Imagination Library
Triple P Level 4
Triple P Level 2
HIPPY
Child Care Training
HealthySteps

Chester

Parents as Teachers

Chesterfield

Parents As Teachers
Imagination Library
Early Education Program Operation

Clarendon

Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

Colleton

Parents as Teachers
Nurturing Parenting
Child Care Coaching
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

Darlington

Parents as Teachers
Motheread/Fatheread
Reach Out and Read
Countdown to Kindergarten
Health Services Coordination and Other Health Programming

Dillon

Nurturing Parenting
Raising a Reader
Child Care Coaching
Child Care Training

Dorchester

Motheread/Fatheread
Reach Out and Read
HIPPY
Child Care Coaching
Countdown to Kindergarten

Edgefield

Imagination Library
Triple P Level 4
LEAP for K
3K Support
Child Care Training

Fairfield

Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Countdown to 4K

Florence

ParentChild+
HIPPY
Child Care Coaching
Child Care Training

Georgetown

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY
3K Support

Greenville

Imagination Library
Reach Out and Read
Triple P Level 2
Triple P Level 4
HIPPY
Nurse Family Partnership

Greenwood

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY

Hampton

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY
Reach Out and Read
Child Care Training

Horry

HIPPY
LEAP for K
Library Based and Other Learning Programs
Early Identification and Referral (PASOs)

Jasper

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY
Imagination Library
Reach Out and Read
Child Care Training

Kershaw

Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Countdown to 4K

Lancaster

Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library
Early Head Start
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

Laurens

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY
Reach Out and Read
Imagination Library
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

Lee

Parents as Teachers
Strengthening Families
HIPPY
Imagination Library
Motherread/Fatheread
Raising a Reader
Reach Out and Read
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Countdown to 4K
Health Services Coordination and Other Health
Programming

Lexington

Parents as Teachers
Countdown to Kindergarten

Marion

Library Based and Other Learning Programs
Raising a Reader
Nurturing Parenting
Child Care Coaching
Child Care Training

Marlboro

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY
Reach Out and Read
Child Care Training

McCormick

Library Based and Other Learning Programs
Nurturing Parenting
HIPPY
Imagination Library
3K Support

Newberry

Parents as Teachers
Library Based and Other Learning Programs
Triple P Level 4
Reach Out and Read
Countdown to Kindergarten
Countdown to 4K

Oconee

Imagination Library
Reach out and Read
Parents As Teachers
HIPPY
Nurse Family Partnership

Orangeburg

Parents as Teachers
Raising a Reader
Countdown to Kindergarten
Countdown to 4K
HealthySteps

Pickens

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY
Reach Out and Read
Nurse Family Partnership
Library Based and Other Learning Programs
Countdown to Kindergarten

Richland

Parents as Teachers
Early Head Start
Becoming A Mom
Triple P Level 4

Saluda

Library Based and Other Learning Programs
Triple P Level 4
LEAP for K
Child Care Training

Spartanburg

HIPPY
Nurse Family Partnership
Early Head Start
Child Care Coaching
Countdown to Kindergarten
Countdown to 4K
Early Identification and Referral
HealthySteps

Sumter

Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library

Union

Parents as Teachers
HIPPY
Child Care Training
HealthySteps

Williamsburg

Parents as Teachers
Imagination Library
HIPPY
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

York

Parents as Teachers
HealthySteps

Proposed Changes to FY26-27 Program Guidelines

Recommendation Date May 26, 2026

Effective date July 1, 2026

Due to recent changes in the allocation of evidence-based scholarships, the program team is proposing a change to the FY26-27 SCFS Program Guidelines to reflect the following:

1. Removal of Child Care Scholarships as a program.
2. Addition of the following section to the General Program Guidelines.

Through SC Department of Social Services - funded child care scholarships distributed by First Steps Local Partnerships, eligible children may receive tuition-free enrollment at child care programs participating in ABC Quality, South Carolina's child care provider quality rating and improvement system. To be eligible to apply for a scholarship, client parents or caregivers must be enrolled in a direct-service, high-intensity, evidence-based program with the Local Partnership and meet all associated program dosage requirements. For children receiving these scholarships, Local Partnerships must ensure that an age-appropriate developmental screening is completed within the first 90 days of scholarship enrollment.



Local Partnership Program and Grants Committee

June 9, 2026, 2:30pm

Virtual

Members Present: Wes Wooten, John Hayes, Jack McBride, Roger Pryor

Staff Present: Ann Vandervliet, Kerry Cordan, Gina Beebe, Kate Roach, LaMyra Sanders-Dukes, Jade Wright, Jessica Fluker, Lexi Jones

Wes Wooten called the meeting to order with quorum present at 2:45 p.m.

Wes Wooten made a motion to enter executive session for the discussion of local partnership budgets. The motion was seconded by Jack McBride, and all were in favor.

With no action taken in executive session, a motion to exit executive session was made by Jack McBride and seconded by John Hayes, all were in favor.

Upon leaving executive session, the following action was taken:

Roger Pryor made the motion to approve all budgets submitted that are in alignment with the legislative requirements and fiscal and operational guidelines, except the following counties. The counties are Barnwell, Darlington, Florence, Georgetown, Lancaster, and Marion that need additional review and modifications to achieve compliance with South Carolina First Steps policies and related legislation. Jack McBride seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Wes Wooten made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Roger Pryor, all voted in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.



June 18, 2026

To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees
From: Dr. Amy Williams
RE: **Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee**

The Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee of the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees met on May 27th, 2026. The committee discussed and took action on the following requests:

To discuss the findings of an internal evaluation on the impact of combining Local Partnership parenting programs with 4K enrollment. These results indicated that students who were enrolled in First Steps 4K and received a high dose of either Parents as Teachers (PAT) or Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youth (HIPPO) were 4-9 times more likely to demonstrate readiness on the KRA.

To discuss and vote on the 2022-26 Child Trends external evaluation topic. The committee voted to investigate the effects of pre-literacy enhancements on parenting program outcomes.

Meeting minutes are included in your board meeting packet.



Strategic Planning and Evaluation Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

Virtual (via Teams)

Members Present (3): Dr. Amy Williams (Chair), David Morley, Dr. James DuRant

Staff Present (6): David O'Kelly, Emika Aroh, PhD, Molly Tuck, Ann Vandervliet, Kate Roach, Jade Wright

Others Present (2): Mary Lynne Diggs, Wes Wooten

Meeting was called to order at 11:02 AM by Dr. Amy Williams. Meeting minutes from February 25th were approved by the committee.

Molly Tuck, Director of Research and Evaluation, presented on the results of an internal evaluation showing the KRA impact of combining Local Partnership parenting programs with 4K enrollment.

Molly Tuck, Director of Research and Evaluation, presented on a topic proposal for the upcoming Child Trends evaluation.

The committee voted and approved to have Child Trends investigate the effects of pre-literacy enhancements on parenting programs for the 2022-2026 evaluation.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Attachments:

- Committee Slides including:
 - An Internal Evaluation on Program Stacking across First Steps 4K and Local Partnership Parenting Programs: Strategic Data Project Fellowship Capstone Results
 - Proposal on Upcoming Child Trends External Evaluation Topic: Parenting Programs with Pre-Literacy Enhancements



June 18, 2026

To: First Steps Board of Trustees
From: Jesica Mackey, Committee Chair
RE: Finance and Administration Committee Report

The Finance and Administration Committee met on May 14th, 2026.

David O’Kelly, Chief Financial Officer, reviewed the June 30, 2025 annual audit report and the Form 990 draft for the year ended June 30, 2025.

The Committee reviewed the audit finding which indicated First Steps did not timely close out its financial records and complete its Financial Statements and audit report draft for the year ended June 30, 2025. Mr. O’Kelly reviewed the causes for the delays:

- Essential staff vacancies in finance.
- The impact of the separation of SC First Steps from the Department of Education into a stand-alone agency, a process that added substantially to the accounting workload throughout the year, and to year-end close-out and audit preparation work after year-end.
- The failure of the Blackbaud accounting system, followed by the emergency new system procurement and selection in Spring 2025, and the implementation of the new SAGE system and related data migration, training and other tasks.
- Delays in response from the auditors attributed to their own short staffing.

Mr. O’Kelly reviewed the progress to date in filling finance staffing vacancies and indicated that management fully expects to comply with the reporting deadlines for the year ended June 30, 2026 and beyond.

Ms. Robin Ebert, formerly First Steps Local Partnership Fiscal Director, has been promoted to First Steps Director of Finance.

Mr. Shaji Kuriakose has joined First Steps as its new Local Partnership Fiscal Director.

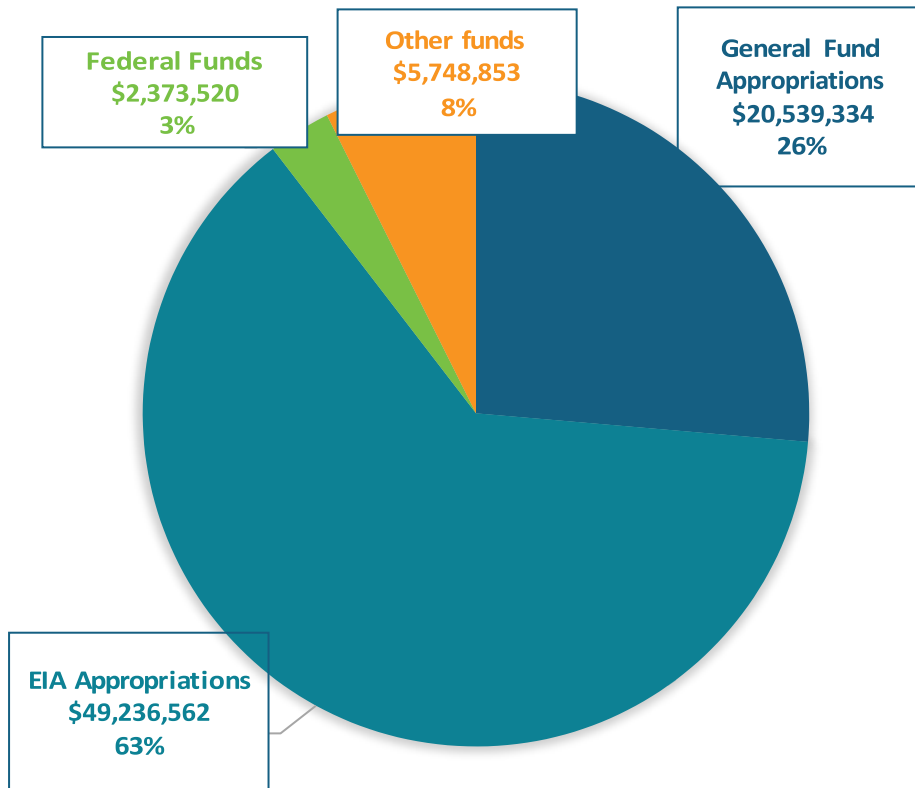
The Local Partnership Financial System Implementation is on track. Local Partnership began using SAGE instead of Blackbaud to process financial transactions effective May 1st. We are now working to finalize year-to-date numbers through April in Blackbaud, and load into Sage the transactions originally recorded in Blackbaud.

Meeting minutes are included in the board meeting packet.

Budget Vs. Actual (July 1, 2025 – May 31, 2026)

Expense Category	25-26 Budget	Actual Ending May 31, 2026	Utilization Rate
Administration	\$ 3,506,301	\$ 2,216,384	63.2%
Local First Steps Partnerships	\$30,551,244	\$27,072,534	88.6%
First Steps 4K	\$40,686,113	\$ 36,656,684	90.1%
Early Childhood Advisory Council	\$ 3,124,611	\$ 1,205,196	38.6%
TOTAL	\$77,868,269	\$67,150,798	86.1%

25-26 Funding by Type





Finance and Administration Committee Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2026

Virtual (via Zoom)

Members Present (2): Jacque Curtin, Dave Morley

Members Absent: (1) Jessica Mackey

Staff Present (1): David O'Kelly

Dave Morley called the meeting to order with a quorum present at 4:02 p.m.

Jacque Curtin made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2026 Finance and Administration Committee meeting. Motion was seconded by Dave Morley. Motion passed.

David O'Kelly, Chief Financial Officer, reviewed the June 30, 2025 annual audit report and the Form 990 draft for the year ended June 30, 2025.

The Committee reviewed the audit finding, which indicated First Steps did not timely close out its financial records and complete its Financial Statements and audit report draft for the year ended June 30, 2025.

Due to the delay, the audit testing and report review were delayed, and First Steps did not comply with State law which requires audited financial statements to be submitted to the Comptroller General's office no later than October 1. Throughout the process, David O'Kelly was in consistent communication with the State Auditor's Office and the Comptroller General's Office. The delays were caused by the following:

- Essential staff vacancies in finance.
- The impact of the separation of SC First Steps from the Department of Education into a stand-alone agency. The transition formally occurred in FY 24-25. The completion of this process and resulting coding conversions for previously posted transactions and balances added substantially to the accounting workload throughout the year, and to close-out and audit preparation work after year-end.
- The failure of the Blackbaud accounting system, followed by emergency procurement in Spring 2025, and the selection process for a new system, followed by extensive new SAGE system implementation, data migration from Blackbaud to SAGE, training and other tasks.
- Delays in response from the auditors, attributed to their own short staffing.

Mr. O'Kelly reviewed the progress to date in filling finance staffing vacancies and indicated that the management fully expects to comply with the reporting deadlines for the year ended June 30, 2026 and beyond.

Jacque Curtin made a motion to accept the June 30, 2025 annual audit report draft and the Form 990 draft as presented, with resolution of miscellaneous questions and typographical corrections discussed. Motion was seconded by Dave Morley. Motion passed.

Dave Morley made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Jacque Curtin. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.



Date: June 18, 2026
To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees
From: Senator Greg Hembree
RE: **Legislative Committee Report**

April 14, 2026- The Senate Finance Subcommittee recommended to the Senate a budget which included the \$5 million innovation funding, the \$9.9 million dollar increase for 4K, but struck the transfer of the remainder of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library from the Department of Education to SCFS that was included in SC House version.

April 23, 2026- The budget was passed by the Senate with the recommendations above from the Senate Finance Subcommittee.

May 6, 2026- The SC House amended the Senate version and the provision to transfer the remainder funds from the Department of Education to SCFS was placed back in the House amended Senate version.

May 13, 2026- Over 225 people attended the SC First Steps Legislative Breakfast that was held from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM in Room 112 of the Blatt Building. Legislators and their staff members were greeted by SCFS staff and 29 local partnership executive directors.

June 10, 2026- The amended version of budget that has not yet been signed by the Governor included no new funds for the administration of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. However it does have a provision under the Education act for the remainder of the funds from the 2025 allocation of the program to be transferred to SCFS for the support and administration of the program.

Budget presentations to date:

- The House Ways and Means, Jan. 13, 2026
- The Senate Finance Committee, March 12, 2026

Events to date:

- Early Advantage, Foundations for SC's Economic Vitality, February 3, 2026
- Our Annual SCFS Legislative Breakfast, May 13, 2026