Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY)

Child Care Technical Assistance Program Creation or Expansion Grant Opportunity

Deadline: January 20, 2023, by 5:00 pm

Application Link:

https://www.cognitoforms.com/SCFIRSTSTEPS4K/SouthCarolinaFirstStepsLocalPartnershipsChildCareTechnicalAssistanceProgramCreationOrExpansionGrantApplication

Resources for **E**arly **A**cceleration and **D**evelopment in **Y**outh (READY) was created in Proviso 1.105 of the 2022-23 State Budget Bill with $3 million in General Funds, recurring annually, to South Carolina First Steps for the purpose of issuing competitive and targeted grants to local First Steps partnerships.

Funding priorities include evidence-based programs for children birth through age 3 who live in rural communities and in communities where kindergarten readiness scores are consistently below the state average. No more than 10% may be distributed to any one county and no more than 3% retained by the state office for administering, monitoring and evaluating the program.

Child Care Technical Assistance Program Creation or Expansion Grants:

In FY2022-23, South Carolina First Steps intends to award up to $500,000 in READY targeted grants to local First Steps partnerships, renewable for two additional years, to establish or expand a child care technical assistance strategy. The purpose of this funding is to assist Local Partnerships with increasing the number of child care providers receiving intensive, targeted coaching and support to improve their quality. Local Partnerships may apply singularly, or as part of a multi-county application.

Applications will be due January 20, 2023 by 5:00pm for funding consideration by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees at its February 2023 meeting.

Because these grants will be multi-year awards, SC First Steps does not anticipate offering another READY Child Care Technical Assistance Program Creation or Expansion grant in FY2023-24 unless additional funding becomes available.

SC First Steps is hosting an optional, informational webinar about this grant opportunity:

Date/Time: Tuesday, November 29th from 2:00-3:30pm
Register: https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEqcOCvpzsqG9T3BFbiayE1aZ9oNxgWFPSD

Eligibility:

All local First Steps partnerships that have no outstanding Corrective Actions **as of the date of award approval by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees** are eligible to apply for funding or receive funding as part of a multi-county application. Local partnerships with Corrective Actions will have the opportunity to demonstrate sufficient progress during the first half of FY2022-23 in order to be removed from Corrective Action and thereby become eligible to apply for funding.

No organizations outside of local First Steps partnerships are eligible for funding.

Funding Amount and Duration:

Awards will be capped at $100,000 per 12-month period for up to three years. Funding will be available starting the 1st of the month after funding approval.

Local Partnerships may choose to apply, singularly or as part of a multi-county collaboration, for different grant amounts based on the following parameters:

Maximum Award Amount per Local Partnership	Minimum Number of Child Care Providers Served/Year	Staff Needed (part time or full time)
$50,000.00	2	Part time
$100,000.00	5	Full time

Funding will be prorated by fiscal year, in order to align with partnership budgets. Grantees will receive 4 months of funding in FY23 (Mar 2023 – Jun 2023), 12 months in FY24, 12 months in FY25, and 8 months in FY26 (Jul 2025 – Feb 2026).

Continued funding for each 12-month period assumes that a) the local partnership achieves satisfactory progress in serving the projected number of child care providers; b) the local partnership is in overall compliance with its annual grant agreement with SC First Steps, with any future Corrective Actions addressed successfully and expediently; and c) SC First Steps' continued receipt of READY funding from the General Assembly. There is no minimum funding amount.

List of Applicable Child Care Technical Assistance Programs

Programs listed are eligible for expansion and identified as evidence-based strategies by SC First Steps:

- Child Care Quality Enhancement
- Quality Counts (developed by Spartanburg County First Steps)

Allowable Uses of Child Care Technical Assistance Creation or Expansion Funding:

Grant funding from this competition may be used for:

- hiring staff for program model implementation

- providing materials funding to child care providers in accordance with program model standards
- program or administrative materials to accommodate for increases in the projected number of providers served
- contract services for better program delivery
- training and/or professional development for Child Care Technical Assistance program staff

Counties may choose to apply as a consortium and share a Technical Assistant staff member between the counties. If counties decide to partner, each county must submit a budget with the aggregate sum of all budgets not exceeding the maximum grant award amount ($100,000).

READY Child Care Technical Assistance Creation or Expansion Grants are subject to the following conditions:

- Grant funds will be coded separately in the partnership's Budget Spending Plan, using Fund Code(s) provided by SC First Steps.
- State law requires several restrictions for recurring funding to local First Steps partnerships. READY funding is recurring state funding, and therefore carries the same legislative conditions as state formula funding. READY grant funding **will** be included along with state formula funding in percentage calculations used to assess compliance with restrictions for expenditures within Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed programs, Core Functions, and Administrative Expenses, as well as in the calculation of the minimum match amount the partnership must raise from non-state cash and in-kind sources.
- State funding cannot be used for client financial incentives, such as direct payments, gift cards or gas cards. Local partnerships may not provide food within child care quality or training strategies using state funds.
- Personnel costs must be to sustain and/or expand child care technical assistance services. No increases to Executive Director compensation are allowed with this funding unless the ED is providing direct client services.
- Carryforward of READY grant funds will be treated in the same manner as state formula funding. Unexpended READY grant funds carrying forward to the following fiscal year in excess of 15% will require written justification as to how the funds will be fully spent in the subsequent fiscal year, otherwise funding will be proportionately reduced for the next 12-month award.

How to Apply:
The READY Child Care Technical Assistance Creation or Expansion Grant application is available for submission online via Cognito.

Application link:

https://www.cognitoforms.com/SCFIRSTSTEPS4K/SouthCarolinaFirstStepsLocalPartnershipsChildCareTechnicalAssistanceProgramCreationOrExpansionGrantApplication

Applicants will be able to save their applications in-progress and come back to them later, as well as print out their submitted application. This guidance document, budget template, and READY priorities document are available for download on the Grants page of the SC First Steps web site: https://www.scfirststeps.org/what-we-do/grants/.

Applying as a multi-county collaboration: If two or more Local Partnerships wish to apply as a multi-county collaboration, one Partnership must be designated as the lead applicant and submit one application on behalf of the collaborative. Each participating Local Partnership must provide a letter of support signed by the ED and board chair, as well as separate grant budgets for each Partnership receiving funding must be attached to the application. The total amount of funding requested for the entire collaborative cannot exceed the dollar limits described above.

Applicants will answer the following questions regarding their Child Care Technical Assistance Program Creation or Expansion, along with filling in the amount requested (with attention to the maximum funding amounts and service requirements listed above):

1. Amount requested:

   Projected number of new child care providers **AND** classrooms who will be served with this funding: _____ Child Care Providers   _____ Total Classrooms

   Please reference the chart above to determine the maximum award you can request based on the number of child care providers served through this funding.

2. Describe the need in your county for child care technical assistance program creation or expansion. (scoring weight: 40%)

3. Describe your experience working to improve child care quality in your county (either through existing child care technical assistance efforts, child care training program or otherwise) and the quality of your existing partnerships with child care providers. If your Local Partnership has a Child Care Training program, describe how you will you integrate your Child Care Technical Assistance program with your county's child care training. (scoring weight: 15%)

4. Describe your plan for recruiting new child care providers and classrooms to participate in your Child Care Technical Assistance program. If you have already identified providers and/or they have committed to participate, describe them, including their licensed capacity. (scoring weight: 15%)

5. Describe the ways in which you will address the priority areas for this application:

   a. **READY legislative priorities**: including serving children up to age 3, rural areas, and communities with consistently below average KRA scores (scoring weight: 20%)

   b. **Sustaining PDG expansion** (Berkeley, Dillon, Dorchester, Richland, York), provide justification for a continuation of funding through this opportunity by demonstrating PDG grant successes (Ex., number of child care providers projected and served, program staff hired and retained, Quality Improvement Plan goals attained, ABC Quality levels improved, ERS assessment score improvement, etc.) (scoring weight: 5%)

   c. **Other priorities** (scoring weight: 5%)

      i. **Counties without an existing Child Care Technical Assistance program**

      ii. **Provider commitment to enroll in ABC Quality** (establishing child care technical assistance at child care providers that are not enrolled in ABC Quality, with the providers' commitment to enrolling as a condition of participation in the local partnership's child care technical assistance program)

             iii. **Service to home-based providers**

6. Are you applying as a consortium with another county to share a Technical Assistant staff member?

   Identify which county(ies) you are applying with _____.

   Please detail how your plan for distributing the work of the Technical Assistant Provider across counties (for example, number of providers served in each county, office location, etc.).

   If applying as a consortium, each county must submit a budget with the aggregate sum of all budgets not exceeding the maximum grant award amount ($100,000).

Applicants will attach a project budget using the Excel template provided at https://www.scfirststeps.org/what-we-do/grants/. There is the opportunity to attach additional supporting documentation, such as letters of commitment from providers who have agreed to participate should you be awarded this funding.

It is the intent of SC First Steps that this funding benefit as many local partnerships as possible. Given the amount of funding available and the maximum award amount, it is estimated that 6-8 local partnerships will receive awards.

There may not be sufficient funding to award grants to all local partnerships that apply. To maximize your partnership's chances of success, do the following.

- Provide detailed responses to application questions. Although the application itself is brief, be specific and thorough in your responses to the questions asked. Back up your request with specific examples and support.

- Attach a budget for the entire project period, using the template provided, that is accurate, detailed and reasonable as per the project scope and projected numbers served; includes cost justifications for each line item; and adheres to the financial guidelines provided in the application guidance.

- Attach letters of support from each participating Partnership, if applicable. Additional documentation is optional, but highly recommended. Documentation examples include commitment letters and/or testimonials from child care providers interested in participating in your Child Care Technical Assistance program. Attachment files cannot exceed 250MB.

- Target your request to addressing READY legislative priorities, including serving children up to age 3, rural areas, and communities with consistently below average KRA scores. If the partnership does not meet rural and KRA priorities county-wide, consider infrastructure resources targeting eligible communities within the county. Community-level demographic data on READY legislative priorities will be provided to local partnerships and added to https://www.scfirststeps.org/what-we-do/grants/.

- Address other grant priority areas, as outlined in Question 5.b. and 5.c. above.

- Submit all information requested, by the deadline. Late applications will not be considered.

Conditions of Receiving Funding

Local Partnerships must agree to the following conditions if awarded this grant funding:

- Participate in bi-monthly Child Care Technical Assistant Network meetings hosted by SC First Steps.
- Agree to periodic site visits and observations of technical assistance by the SC First Steps Child Care Quality Coordinator.
- For applicants applying for expansion of an existing Child Care Technical Assistance strategy, applicants must demonstrate that the program is currently meeting requirements as evidenced by a First Steps Data Collection system review. For those applying to create a new Child Care Technical Assistance strategy, applicants must demonstrate that they meet requirements in their Child Care Training strategy as evidenced by FSDC system review. If the county or counties applying do not have a Child Care Technical Assistance strategy or a Child Care Training strategy, applicants must demonstrate that they are meeting requirements for current programs as evidenced by a FSDC system review.
- All participating child care providers must be enrolled in ABC Quality or apply for enrollment as a condition for participation in Local Partnership Child Care Technical Assistance program (see priority areas above).

Review and Selection:

Applications that are complete and submitted online through Cognito by the deadline will be reviewed and scored by reviewers with child care coaching and/or director experience outside of the Local Partnership Team at SC First Steps. Local Partnership team members will not score applications but may provide input to the review team. Scoring will take into consideration:

- Responsiveness to application questions and demonstrated need and demand in county for child care technical assistance services to support quality improvement in early childhood settings

- Evidence of past successes with working with child care providers, if applicable, as well as past performance with competitive and targeted funding awarded by SC First Steps

Reviewer recommendations will be reviewed by senior staff, then provided to the Program and Grants Committee of the state board for review before going to the full board for approval.

Local Board Approval:

SC First Steps will consider applications without advance board approval as long as the local board meets and approves the application prior to funds being awarded. SC First Steps recommends that EDs make their board members aware of their proposed application(s) and discuss with their board chair, executive committee, and/or other appropriate committee.