

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026





Mission

We prepare our county for success by advancing high quality early childhood services.

Vision

Every Lancaster County child will enter school ready to succeed.

Values

Focus on the child.

Support the family.

Foster equity.

Enhance community collaboration.

Use evidence-based practices and services.

Promote accountability.

Message from the Executive Director



Anthony Howell
Executive Director
Lancaster County First
Steps

This strategic plan was developed from our Community Needs Assessment and is intended to reflect our values and goals. Our dedication to Lancaster County service providers, families, and children is evident through our high-quality programs and services. In our efforts, our Mission and Values are reflected in all of our interactions. Thank you for taking the time to review our strategic plan and we look forward to enhancing our community of Lancaster County.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Howell". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

Strategic Plan Process

CONVENE

Held community convenings to develop a vision for young children and their families

October 2022 – January 2023



UNDERSTAND

Reviewed local data and map assets to understand the state of young children, their families, and the early childhood system

October 2022 – March 2023



PRIORITIZE

Organized the insight gathered from the convenings and data to prioritize the concerns, needs, and gaps the partnership wants to address and formalized Needs Assessment

January 2023 – March 2023



PLAN

Wrote the partnership's three-year Strategic Plan using the Needs Assessment

March 2023 – May 2023



APPLY

Utilize the Strategic Plan to inform the partnership's Annual Formula Funding Grant Application

May 2023, May 2024, May 2025



IMPLEMENT

Execute the programs and services outlined in the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026



MONITOR

Track the partnership's progress on implementing programs to fidelity and on achieving the Strategic Plan

July 2023 – June 2026



Priority Needs: Summary

Through a series of community convenings, a needs assessment and asset mapping process, the following needs were prioritized for Lancaster County.

1. INCREASE AWARENESS AND ENSURE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

Various community resources exist that families may not be aware of or have difficulty accessing needed services. The team will investigate First 5 SC, which helps connect families with SC's public services for young children. In addition, participants emphasized that linking family members to needed mental health services will be very important.

2. PROMOTE HEALTHY PARENT AND CHILD INTERACTIONS (EDUCATION, SOCIAL SKILLS, DISCIPLINE).

Participants believe that to improve the outcomes of young children, emphasis needs to be placed on parents. Participants shared several evidence-based programs, trainings, and potential ways to model and promote healthy parent and child interactions.

3. ENHANCE AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE PROVIDERS THROUGHOUT LANCASTER COUNTY

The team agreed that enhancing affordable and quality childcare providers is very important. Discussions included trainings with childcare workers, increasing advocacy of children and educating physicians on EPSDT Screenings (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment).

Objectives

1. ENHANCE THE ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF CHILDCARE IN LANCASTER COUNTY.

2. INCREASE AWARENESS OF AND ENSURE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES.

3. PROMOTE HEALTHY PARENT AND CHILD INTERACTIONS.

Objective One: ENHANCE THE ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF CHILDCARE IN LANCASTER COUNTY

STRATEGY 1.1

Participate in the State Office's lobbying/advocacy events.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2024, Lancaster County First Steps will send a representative to two lobby or advocacy events hosted by the state office.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will work with the State Office to determine best events to attend.

STRATEGY 1.2

Recruit new participants for our trainings.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2026, we will have 10 new parents participating in our training programs.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with the State Office and local agencies to advertise our services.

Objective One: ENHANCE THE ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF CHILDCARE IN LANCASTER COUNTY

STRATEGY 1.3

Encourage parents to stay up to date with doctor's appointments and check-ups.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2025, Lancaster County First Steps will have two partnerships with local pediatricians.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will work local pediatrician offices to promote the importance of check-ups and well visits.

STRATEGY 1.4

Continue to partner with childcare centers to grow the capacity of directors and staff.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2026, a referral pipeline for childcare workers to attend York Technical College will be established.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with the Local childcare centers and York County Technical College to achieve this.

Objective Two: INCREASE AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

STRATEGY 2.1

Update our website and expand social media accounts.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2025, Lancaster County First Steps will have accounts on two social media websites with at least 50 followers.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with a local consultant to advise us on best social media practices.

STRATEGY 2.2

Hire multilingual staff member.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2026, Lancaster County First Steps will have a part-time Spanish-speaking staff member or a Spanish-speaking partner.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will work within local communities of non-English speakers to identify applicants.

Objective Two: INCREASE AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

STRATEGY 2.3

Host a community event.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2024, Lancaster County First Steps will host a community event with at least 20 attendees.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with the Chamber of Commerce, local Library, and local vendors to achieve this.

STRATEGY 2.4

Offer online resources.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2025, Lancaster County First Steps will have adapted one program to the digital format and be used by at least 10 families.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will work with the state office and a local digital consultant to achieve this.

Objective Three: PROMOTE HEALTHY PARENT AND CHILD INTERACTIONS

STRATEGY 3.1

Develop parent incentives to participate in Countdown to Kindergarten.

SMART GOAL(S)

- By the end of FY2026, Countdown to Kindergarten incentives will be in place with one teacher per elementary school servicing 6 students.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with the school district to assist us in this.

STRATEGY 3.2

Test alternative recruitment for our parent workshops.

SMART GOAL(S)

- By the end of FY2025, we will host at least two parent workshops with 10 families in attendance.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will test methods through hospitals, doctors, social media, local governments, the library, churches, and the Recreation Department.

Overarching Measure(s) of Success

MORE CHILDREN ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN READY FOR SUCCESS

By 2025, the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will increase by 2% each year to 37.7%.

Acknowledgments

Lancaster County First Steps would like to acknowledge some of the organizations that assisted in developing our Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan:

Hope Lancaster

United Way

University of South Carolina Lancaster (USCL)

Promise Neighborhood

NAMI

Lancaster County School District

Sheriff Department

Lancaster County Police Department

Lancaster County Partners for Youth

We would also like to acknowledge Lancaster County First Steps Board of Director's and Program Staff for their hard work and diligence in helping to make Lancaster County a great place to live!

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