



FY26-27 Comprehensive Grant Application Overview

March 4, 2026



Agenda

- Program guidelines reminders
- Policy updates
- Grant application
- Budget development
- Additional Guidance

Program Guidelines

FY26-27 Guidelines will be posted on the website.

When selecting programs please review changes to:

- Evidence determinations
- Program areas
- Updates to program delivery requirements

Program Guidelines

New Program Added!

Becoming A Mom is a comprehensive prenatal education program developed by March of Dimes to support healthy pregnancies by promoting healthy lifestyles and equipping women with tools to navigate pregnancy, labor and delivery, and the postpartum period.

Policy Updates

Executive Director Hiring, Compensation, and Annual Evaluation

- Approved by Executive Committee this week
- Will be added to the LP Fiscal and Operational Manual
- Finalizing forms and submission process

Policy Updates

Local Partnership Procurement Policy

- Finalizing the draft and will be sent to Executive Committee for review at the next meeting

Policy Updates

Local Partnership Personnel Policies

- Combines previous “round 1” policies with additional policies
- Required adoption but allows for local additions
- Currently under review by lawyer

FY26-27 Comprehensive Grant Application

Released: March 4, 2026

Due: April 15, 2026, 11:59 p.m.

Grant Application, Guidance, and Materials can be found on the Grants page of the SCFS website

FY26-27 Comprehensive Grant Application

Within this application SC First Steps is offering three types of state funding to support these goals:

- 1) Recurring Formula funding
- 2) Recurring READY funding
- 3) Non-recurring funding for Innovation Investments.

Any partnership on corrective action at the time of award is ineligible to receive any competitive award (READY or Innovation Investments).

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Formula Funding

- FY26-27 Formula amounts will be available soon, pending State board approval
- Application sections focus on partnership performance in meeting minimum qualifications for formula grant funding

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READY Funding

READY Funding is **competitive**, one-year funding, that aims to expand one or more programs supported by Formula or other non-First Steps funding.

Minimum amount available statewide for READY awards: \$2,910,000

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READY Funding must:

- Prioritize evidence-based programs for children from birth through age three who live in rural communities and in communities where kindergarten readiness scores are consistently below the state average.
- Limit funding to any one county to 10%, currently \$300,000.
- Expand child- or family- focused programs including parenting, health, and early care and education.

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Innovation Investment Funding

Innovation Investment funding is designed to reduce administrative costs and increase reach for evidence-based and high-intensity programs.

Potential: \$5,000,000 in non-recurring funds

No geographic cap

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Requests for Innovation Investments must include:

- Collaboration between 2 or more geographically contiguous counties/partnerships
- Implementation of an evidence-based AND high-intensity program
- Serving a minimum of 50 additional/new children or families
- One administrative lead partnership
- Strong technical assistance at the state and/or national level

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For 2026-2027, Innovation Investment focus areas will be:

- Parenting education and home visiting (priority: PAT, HIPPY)
- Early care and education with parenting (priority: LEAP for K with Parenting)
- Health (priority: Healthy Steps)

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Additional Considerations:

- No geographic cap
- Lead partnership is responsible for overall project supervision, implementation, financial management, data collection, and reporting
- Joint supervision plans may be needed
- Collaboration agreements must be developed and submitted with grant application

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Additional Considerations:

- LPs may participate in multiple Innovation Investment projects
- LPs on CAP may participate but will be ineligible to receive funding until all CAPs are resolved
- Consult with your PO, finance, and other state staff to develop the implementation plan

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Countdown to Kindergarten

At this time, there is not funding available for a separate Countdown to Kindergarten application for Summer 2027. Local partnerships that wish to support this program should include CTK in their FY26-27 Comprehensive Grant Application using Formula funding (up to the 25% limitation on evidence-informed programming).

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Current HIPPY Restoration Grantee Partnerships

The HIPPY Restoration funding opportunity will not be offered in FY26-27. Partnerships wishing to sustain or grow their HIPPY program should include it in their FY26-27 Comprehensive Grant Application using Formula, READY, and/or Innovation Investment funding.

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DSS PAT Reimbursement (Community Pathways)

Service reimbursement from SCDSS - in the form of Traditional and Community Pathways - represents a significant source of potential funding for local partnerships seeking to enhance and/or expand their Parents as Teachers program. Additional information and budgeting guidance will be provided.

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Scoring Considerations

- Detailed and thorough responses
- Quality of work and past performance
- Understanding of, and strategies to improve, areas of opportunity
- Alignment with strategic plan and overall goals
- Prioritization of strategies that have the most impact for the most children or families
- Strengthen systems and the collective impact
- Demonstrates data-driven decision making

FY26-27 Comprehensive Grant Application

Section 1: Partnership Performance

Assess partnership's performance on meeting Minimum Qualifications and implementing best practice guidelines for First Steps local partnerships, across five domains:

- Governance
- Operations and Accountability
- Fiscal and Resource Development
- Program Strategies
- Core Functions

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Partnership Performance

- Refer to the year-end review provided by PO
- Describe what has gone well, what needs improvement, and what steps the partnership is taking or plans to take to improve based on assessment of the partnership and feedback from state office staff.
- Address any impact on plans for FY26-27

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Partnership Performance – basic question

Provide an overall assessment of your partnership's performance related to board governance in 2025-2026, including successes and challenges, and what improvement strategies are planned for 2026-2027.

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Partnership Performance – Fiscal and Resource Development

Describe progress to date with securing and managing grants and other non-First Steps funding in 2025-2026, including level and type of grants and/or donations.

Describe any refinements you made to your fiscal practices to align with core competencies presented this year including, but not limited to, strategic thinking, financial know-how, budgeting and planning, cash flow analysis, cost control, accountability and adaptability.

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Partnership Performance – Core Functions

Describe your partnership's progress to date in 2025-2026 with supporting and strengthening your local early care and education system. Be as specific as possible and include a description of how your core function activities have impacted families with young children.

Describe your 2026-2027 plans within core functions that will further strengthen your local early care and education system?

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Partnership Performance – Program Strategies

Provide an overall assessment of how your programs have performed during 2025-2026 to date. Include successes and challenges with recruiting and retaining clients, hiring and retaining staff, rate of completion (percent of enrollees who complete the program or achieve the recommended model dosage), and program outcomes.

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REQUEST FOR 2026-2027 FUNDING

Key Considerations

Program Selection Decision Making

TOOL: Program Selection Worksheet

Estimated Need for Services in Your Early Childhood System

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Program Selection Worksheet

FY27 Grant Funding Worksheet

This worksheet was designed to help you calculate costs for the most commonly selected programs available in the Program Guidelines, based on average cost per unit. This tool is meant to help Local Partnerships plan their Comprehensive Grant Application; submission is not required. Note: this program list is not exhaustive. If you need assistance with programs not listed, please contact your Program Officer.

Programs

⊗ Proposed Program 1

Priority Area

Please select one



Cost Estimation

What is your Projected to Serve number for this program?

+ Add Proposed Program

Would you like to email your work to yourself?

Yes No

FY26-27 Comprehensive Grant Application

FY27 Grant Funding Worksheet

This worksheet was designed to help you calculate costs for the most commonly selected programs available in the Program Guidelines, based on average cost per unit. This tool is meant to help Local Partnerships plan their Comprehensive Grant Application; submission is not required. Note: this program list is not exhaustive. If you need assistance with programs not listed, please contact your Program Officer.

Programs

⊗ Proposed Program 1

Priority Area

Parenting

Select the Program - Parenting

- HIPPY ParentChild+
 Nurturing Parenting Parents as Teachers (PAT)

Cost Estimation

What is your Projected to Serve number for this program? *

15

HIPPY - Minimum Range

\$60,000.00

HIPPY - Maximum Range

\$97,500.00

The range provided is based on the average cost per unit of the program multiplied by the indicated projected to serve.

The state office will be using this cost per unit to evaluate Comprehensive Grant applications. If the total amount of money you are asking for falls outside of the expected range for your projected to serve, you will be expected to provide justification for this cost.

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REQUEST FOR 2026-2027 FUNDING

Program Selection Table (replaces Appendix B)

- Select program
 - Enter service unit
 - Enter PTS for each funding source
 - Describe target population, alignment with priorities, how each funding source supports increased reach

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REQUEST FOR 2026-2027 FUNDING

Program Selection Table

Requesting READY for this program?

- How does this expand reach or impact?
- If READY request is not funded, or decreased, how does that impact program delivery?

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REQUEST FOR 2026-2027 FUNDING

Program Selection Table

Part of an Innovation Project?

- Admin Lead or Supporting Partnership
- Describe collaboration and project management or your role in the project if not lead

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REQUEST FOR 2026-2027 FUNDING

Describe your data-driven decision process for selecting your proposed programs and target populations. How has your partnership changed its program offerings and/or target populations from 2025-2026 to better align with the Key Considerations listed above? For continuing programs, what strategies do you plan to implement to increase retention, achieve full model dosage, and improve client outcomes? How do your proposed programs align with your partnership's Needs and Resources Assessment and Comprehensive Plan?

FY26-27 Comprehensive Grant Application

REQUEST FOR 2026-2027 FUNDING

Describe any collaborations with implementation partners (including other local First Steps partnerships) and how the collaboration will reduce administrative burden, leverage public and philanthropic funding, and reduce service duplication. If possible, estimate the impact of these collaborations on increasing the number of low-income children under 6 receiving services.

PTS= Projected to Serve

For any collaborations, please list the local partnership(s) you will collaborate with or the local agency(ies) you will collaborate with

⊗ Program 1

Program

Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) Level 4, EB, High

EB = Evidence-Based; EI = Evidence-Informed; EB* = Evidence-based when combined with EB program; High = High Intensity, not High = Not High Intensity

Projected to Serve

Service Unit (child, family, adult, provider)	PTS with Formula Funding	PTS with READY Funding	PTS with Innovation Investments	PTS with non-FS funding	PTS Total
⊗ Adults	10	10	50	0	70



Describe the target population(s) (geography, risk factors) and alignment with one or more legislative priorities (serving ages 0-3, rural, historically low KRA scores). Also describe how each source of funding (formula, READY, Innovation) and proposed PTS impacts your capacity to serve more children.

Empty text box for description

Are you requesting READY funding for this program?

- Yes
- No

Is this program part of an Innovation Investment project?

- Yes
- No



Describe your data-driven decision process for selecting your proposed programs and target populations. How has your partnership changed its program offerings and/or target populations from 2025-2026 to better align with the Key Considerations listed above? For continuing programs, what strategies do you plan to implement to increase retention, achieve full model dosage, and improve client outcomes? How do your proposed programs align with your partnership's Needs and Resources Assessment and Strategic Plan?

Empty text box for decision process description

Are you requesting READY funding for this program?

Yes No

Describe how this funding will expand your reach and/or impact. If your READY request is not funded, or funded at a level less than requested, what effect would that have on your programmatic offerings (i.e., would require reducing staff, reduced caseloads, reduction in programs, etc.)? *

Is this program part of an Innovation Investment project?

Yes No

In what capacity will your partnership be participating in this Innovation Investment project?

Administrative Lead Partnership Supporting Partnership

List all the partnerships you will collaborate with for this program/project.

Provide a detailed plan for how your partnership will effectively manage the project including staffing, client recruitment, model fidelity, financial management, data collection and reporting.

Attach a signed collaboration agreement detailing the roles and responsibilities of each participating partnership.

Upload or drag files here.

[Innovation Investment Collaboration Agreement template](#)



Describe your data-driven decision process for selecting your proposed programs and target populations. How has your partnership changed its program offerings and/or target populations from 2025-2026 to better align with the Key Considerations listed above? For continuing programs, what strategies do you plan to implement to increase retention, achieve full model dosage, and improve client outcomes? How do your proposed programs align with your partnership's Needs and Resources Assessment and Strategic Plan?

Describe any collaborations with implementation partners (including other local First Steps partnerships) and how the collaboration will reduce administrative burden, leverage public and philanthropic funding, and reduce service duplication. If possible, estimate the impact of these collaborations on increasing the number of low-income children under 6 receiving services.

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Save

Budget Guidance

NEW Budget template

NEW Chart of Accounts

Budget Guidance at end of Application Guidance document

Budget Guidance

General Budget Guidelines

Funding sources marked as “SCFS state funding” have the following restrictions which apply to all SCFS-issued state funds:

- No more than 13% of SCFS-issued state funds may be used for program 101 – Administration
- No more than 12% of SCFS-issued state funds may be used for program 180 – Core Functions
- A minimum of 75% of SCFS-issued state funds must be allocated to evidenced-based programs

Budget Guidance

General Budget Guidelines

Use the **Budget Narrative** section of the Budget pages to explain how the program's different funding sources (Formula, READY, Innovation, and other funding) will be blended/braided to achieve performance targets and detailed descriptions of the items within a specific line.

Budget Guidance

General Budget Guidelines

Partnerships must document a 15% match of their combined SCFS state funding total via private funds, other grants, or in-kind contributions.

In-kind contributions will not be included in the budget.

Instead, partnerships who are using in-kind contributions to meet the match requirement must submit a list of in-kind contributions for FY27 with the grant application.

Budget Guidance

General Budget Guidelines

- Payroll should be budgeted to as few fund codes as possible.
- Fringe benefits should be charged by fund as a percentage of payroll charged to each fund.
- The budget must include both revenues and expenses. Only revenues from private funds may exceed expenses.
- The board chair must sign the budget summary page which must be included with the grant application.

Budget Guidance

Funding Source	Fund Code	Restrictions
Base EIA Allocation	550	
Prior Year Carryforward	560	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 15% of prior year award• It is suggested to budget no more than 50% of the anticipated carryforward (final carryforward amount will be determined after the prior year audit has been completed)

Budget Guidance

Funding Source	Fund Code	Restrictions
READY	130	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs may not be funded 100% with READY funds
Prior Year Carryforward	121/131/ 141	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 15% of prior year award• Must be used for expenses related to the original purpose of the award• It is suggested to budget no more than 50% of the anticipated carryforward (final carryforward amount will be determined after the prior year audit has been completed)

Budget Guidance

Funding Source	Fund Code	Restrictions
Innovation Investment	160	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If applying for more than one innovation project, each project must be budgeted in a separate column • If proposing a multi-partnership innovation project, payments to partner local partnerships should be listed as contractual expenses with applicable budget narrative of how those funds will be spent by the partner
Innovation Investment Carryforward 1.0 (awards effective 7/1/25)	161	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 15% of prior year award • Must be used for expenses related to the original purpose of the award • It is suggested to budget no more than 50% of the anticipated carryforward (final carryforward amount will be determined after the prior year audit has been completed)
Innovation Investment Carryforward 2.0 HIPPY (awards effective 9/1/25)	161	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be used past 9/30/26 • Up to 15% of prior year award • Must be used for expenses related to the original purpose of the award

Budget Guidance

Funding Source	Fund Code	Restrictions
Parents as Teachers – Community Pathways	213	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Detailed guidance will be provided soon
Parents as Teachers – DSS Referral (Pilot counties only)	212	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partnerships should budget conservatively for this funding based on projections made using FY26 data
Private Funds/Outside Grants	Varies depending on funding source	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partnerships may budget for private funds or outside grants where there is an executed grant agreement, letter of award or contract. The grant award documentation should be included with the budget submissionPartnerships are responsible for understanding and adhering to restrictions given by the funder

Budget Section

	FY27 Budget Complies
The newest budget template was used for FY27 budget planning	<input type="radio"/>
Fund 550 total equals the partnership's proposed allocation amount for FY27	<input type="radio"/>
All proposed program strategies for FY27 are included (include all programs independent of funding)	<input type="radio"/>
The percentage of state funds allocated to Evidence-Informed Programs does not exceed 25% (consider the impact of adding Fund 560 later in the fiscal year)	<input type="radio"/>
Cost allocation percentages align with the partnership's time study on file with SCFS	<input type="radio"/>
The percentage of state funds budgeted to Administration (101) does not exceed 13% (consider the impact of adding Fund 560 later in the fiscal year)	<input type="radio"/>
The percentage of state funds budgeted to Core Functions (180) does not exceed 12% (consider the impact of adding Fund 560 later in the fiscal year)	<input type="radio"/>
Exercised appropriate stewardship and due care in the selection, implementation, and monitoring of all contractors, including competitive bidding for all contracts of \$10,000 or more and no bid awards exceeding a total of 5 years.	<input type="radio"/>

Requirements for including Fund 560 in the FY27 Budget

Partnerships may include up to 50% of their anticipated carry-forward in their budget for spending beginning July 1, 2026. **As soon as the partnership determines that anticipated carry forward varies from their estimate, they should do appropriate budget adjustments so as to not overspend.** Once carry forward amounts have been certified, all partnerships can budget and expend all of their carry forward funds. If the partnership board chooses to approve the use of carry forward at this time, the board must specifically approve this decision and acknowledge that the partnership assumes sole responsibility for the accuracy of their estimated carry forward amount.

Budget Guidance

Please upload your FY27 Budget Summary Page with Signature

or drag files here.

Please upload your FY27 Budget in excel

or drag files here.

Upload Appendix D: Fiscal Signatories Form

or drag files here.

Final Submission

Final Submission

Yay! You have reached the end of the FY27 comprehensive grant application.

In order to submit, please upload your certification form, check the bubble and sign below.

Upload Grant Application Certification Form (Appendix E)

or drag files here.

Additional Documentation

Upload any additional documents that may be helpful in the review process.

Document 1

File

or drag files here.

Provide a description of the document being uploaded

I certify that I have read and understand all requirements for the comprehensive grant application.

Signature



New Budget Template and Chart of Accounts

Budget Development

- WORK WITH THE FINANCE TEAM and your PO EARLY AND OFTEN
- If you need help with the structure (adding funds and programs), send requests in an email.
- If you need help working in the template as you are building the budget, please schedule time to work with a finance team member.
 - Booking links are now in email signatures for Robin, Shante, and Paul.

General Updates

The Local Brief, sent on Tuesdays, will provide upcoming events, trainings, webinars, and news you can use. Make sure you are subscribed and reading those emails.

SAGE/Omnidek Studio Sessions and In-person Training Support

Date/Time	Location	Address
March 6 2:30-3:30p	Virtual	Zoom
March 10 1-2p	Virtual	Zoom
March 12 1-2p	Virtual	Zoom
March 13 10a-12p	Aiken Library Creative Lab	314 Chesterfield Street, Aiken, SC 29801
March 16 3-4p	Virtual	Zoom
March 17 10:30a-12:30p	Colleton First Steps	609 Colleton Loop, Ritter, SC 29488

SAGE/Omnidek Studio Sessions and In-person Training Support

March 20 2-3p	Virtual	Zoom
March 23 10:30a-12:30p	Greenville First Steps	700 N Pleasantburg Drive, Greenville, SC 29607
March 25 10-11a	Virtual	Zoom
March 25 1-3pm	PeeDee Education Center	520 Francis Marion Rd., Florence, SC 29506
March 26 1-3pm	SC First Steps	636 Rosewood Drive, Columbia, SC 29201
March 31 10a-12p	Greenwood Goodwill Training Center	1306 Montague Avenue, Greenwood, SC 29649

SAGE/Omnidek Studio Sessions and In-person Training Support

April 9 3-4pm	Virtual	Zoom
April 15 3-4pm	Virtual	Zoom
April 22 3-4pm	Virtual	Zoom
April 29 3-4pm	Virtual	Zoom

DSS PAT Reimbursement Guidance

Additional information, including budget guidance specific to DSS PAT reimbursement will be provided during a webinar on March 19 (11:00am).

Please plan to join us if you are interested in pursuing this opportunity!



Thank

Thank you!

Questions?

You