

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026





Mission

Newberry County First Steps, working in collaboration with parents, families, caregivers, educators, and our community, provides opportunities and experiences so that all children enter school ready to reach their highest potential.

Vision

Newberry County children will be equipped to reach their highest potential.

Values

Children. From prenatal development through age five, our focus and priority are young children, their families and caregivers.

Relationships. We build trusting and respectful relationships to engage and affect positive change.

Excellence. Our programs and services are high-quality, culturally responsive, inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and delivered with fidelity to maximize a positive impact on children and families in our community.

Equity. All children and families should have access to the opportunities and resources they need to be successful, and all voices should be solicited and heard.

Advocacy. We commit to identify, fully consider, and appropriately advance the interests of children and families in our community and beyond.

Message from the Executive Director



Sarah Eargle
Executive Director
Newberry County First Steps

Newberry County First Steps (NCFS) champions the vital roles that families, individuals, and organizations play in growing strong, resilient children that are “ready” for school.

Working with stakeholders in our community, we completed a needs assessment to identify gaps in resources and to explore ways to increase the quality of care, support, and education for children and families in Newberry County. This plan highlights some of the ways NCFS will address the identified priorities.

During the next three years NCFS will strive to overcome challenges, create solutions, enhance programs and resources, and provide comprehensive, high-quality, and equitable programs for young children and their families in Newberry County.

Sarah Eargle

Message from the Board Chair



Roberta H. Kinard

Board Chair

Newberry County First Steps

I consider it a great honor to serve as Chair for Newberry County First Steps. Mrs. Sarah Eargle, Executive Director, and the Newberry First Steps team embrace the mission of First Steps and work tirelessly to provide effective early childhood services to those in the community. Research has clearly proven early childhood interventions can positively change a child's development path. With the continuous support of community members, partners, and the Board of Trustees., Newberry First Steps will continue to provide high quality resources and services to ensure all children begin school ready to learn at their highest potential.

Roberta Hall Kinard

Strategic Plan Process

CONVENE

Distributed surveys to parents, community members, and community organizations. Held community convenings to develop a vision for young children and their families

December 2022 – February 2023



UNDERSTAND

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

January 2023 – 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

February 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 Newberry County. See our full needs assessment here: www.newberryfirststeps.org/reports

1. INCREASE PARENT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Provide more opportunities for parents to participate in parenting sessions, learn about early childhood development, and gain knowledge to help their children prepare for kindergarten.

2. IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Improve networking, communication, and connections for children and families, and between organizations. Make sure communication and access is equitable across race, ethnicity, and socio-economic levels.

3. CREATE A CARING AND EQUITABLE COMMUNITY OF ENGAGED PARENTS, CHILDREN, COMMUNITY, AND EDUCATORS

Working within our programs and with community partners, uphold the unique value and dignity of each child and family by providing materials, opportunities and education that celebrate diversity and inclusion for all.

4. PROVIDE SUPPORTS FOR QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Assist childcare centers with quality training and technical assistance. Provide programs to support early childhood development.

Objectives

1. DEEPEN FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Families will be supported as their child's first and most important teacher. We will increase awareness of high-quality programs, expand and enhance opportunities for families to engage in parenting education, gain knowledge of early childhood development, and school readiness skills.

2. COMMUNITY MEMBERS, PARTNERS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS ARE BETTER POSITIONED TO UNDERSTAND AND ACT UPON MATTERS RELATED TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

We will work to create a caring and equitable community of engaged parents, children, community, and educators. This includes strengthening access, networking, communication, and connections for children and families and between organizations.

3. EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PARENTING PROGRAMS ARE HIGH-QUALITY, EQUITABLE, AND ACCESSIBLE

Our Partnership will strive for excellence by providing quality programs and supports across sectors focusing on equity, increasing kindergarten readiness for all children, and improving capacity to meet identified needs.

4. STRENGTHEN OUR INTERNAL CAPACITY TO BUILD ON AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY, INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION

We will build capacity within our organization to address expansion and enhancement of programs and outreach. To increase capacity, we will focus on Board education and increasing funding so we can grow program participation and impact.

Objective One:

Deepen Family Engagement

STRATEGY 1.1

Parents as Teachers and Triple P

SMART GOAL

- By the end of FY26, the percentage of Families who participate in Newberry First Steps evidence based, high intensity parenting programs will increase by 20%.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will partner with Newberry Parenting/Family Literacy Program, Adult Education, Westview Behavioral' s parenting outreach program, and encourage referrals from other community organizations.

STRATEGY 1.2

Community Outreach

SMART GOAL(S)

- By the end of FY26, we will provide community parenting/early childhood education events/sessions once a quarter. To alleviate engagement barriers, the sessions can be offered using multiple methods as needed (in-person or digitally).
- At least two of the events/sessions will be held in underserved communities.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- We will partner with local agencies and community organizations that hosts meetings and/or events that reach children and families in the County.

Objective Two: Community members, partners, and service providers are better positioned to understand and act upon matters related to young children and families

STRATEGY 2.1

Community Education

SMART GOAL(S)

- We will participate in at least 6 community events yearly distributing parenting and early childhood educational materials and books.
- By the end of FY26, 85% of our Brochures and materials will be provided in Spanish.
- Partnership staff will attend at least 6 local interagency and community meetings.
- NCFS will host at least two community convenings related to young children and their families.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will collaborate with our local agencies, businesses, community organizations, and the cities/towns and County of Newberry.

Objective Two: Community members, partners, and service providers are better positioned to understand and act upon matters related to young children and families

STRATEGY 2.2

Resource Guide

SMART GOAL(S)

- By FY24, print and share an updated local family resource guide with local agencies, organizations, and families.
- By FY26, the guide would have an online version that could be kept updated.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will collaborate with local agencies, the Newberry Chamber of Commerce, and community organizations that serve children and families.

Objective Three: Early Childhood Programs are High-Quality, Equitable, and Accessible

STRATEGY 3.1

Parenting Programs

SMART GOAL(S)

- By the end of FY26, the percentage of Families who participate in Newberry First Steps evidence based, high intensity parenting programs will increase by 20%.
- By the end of FY26 the percentage of children participating from underserved communities will increase by 10%.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will collaborate with our community stakeholders to recruit families and children.

STRATEGY 3.2

Countdown to Kindergarten Programs

SMART GOAL(S)

- By the summer of 2026, 100 children will participate in the Countdown to Kindergarten/Countdown to 4K Programs.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will collaborate with the School District of Newberry County, Head Start, childcare centers, and community organizations.

Objective Three: Early Childhood Programs Are High-quality, Equitable, And Accessible

STRATEGY 3.3

Child Care Quality Counts and Training

SMART GOAL(S)

- By the end of FY26, the number of licensed child care centers participating in Quality Counts will increase from 2 centers to 4 centers.
- By the end of FY26, at least half of the centers participating in Quality Counts will increase their star rating to 4 stars or better.
- By the end of FY26, the number of child care and early childhood education staff participating in at least 10 hours of certified trainings provided by NCFS will increase by 15%.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will collaborate with certified trainers, childcare centers, preschools, and early childhood staff.

Objective Four: Strengthen Our Internal Capacity To Build On And Maintain A Healthy, Inclusive, And Sustainable Organization

STRATEGY 4.1

Capacity Building

SMART GOAL(S)

- In FY24, NCFS will contract with a consultant to review procedures and policies and work with the ED and Board to make sure best practices and organizational needs are being met.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will collaborate with other non-profits in Newberry County and Together SC.

STRATEGY 4.2

Resource Development

SMART GOAL(S)

- By FY26, NCFS will increase the amount of donations and grant funding received by 15%.
- By FY26, we will raise our profile and community awareness by placing signage and brochures in at least 12 locations throughout the County.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will collaborate with local and State businesses, foundations, and granting agencies and our community members.

Overarching Measure of Success

MORE CHILDREN ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN READY FOR SUCCESS

By FY26, the percentage of children in Newberry County who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will increase 1% each year to 28.4%.

Acknowledgments

We want to express our gratitude and appreciation to those who contributed to the Newberry County First Steps' Needs and Resources Assessment and Strategic Plan. A special thanks goes out to the Newberry First Steps Board of Directors. You supported and participated in the process and shared valuable insights from your work and experiences.

Many thanks go out to the childcare staff, parents, and community members who shared and filled out surveys. You are always willing partners in our quest to find the best ways to serve young children and families in Newberry County.

With much appreciation, I would also like to acknowledge the crucial role community organization representatives, parents, and community members played during our community meetings. Together we strengthen our connections which allows us to identify needs and collaborate to fill gaps in resources and increase the quality of care, support, and education for children and families in Newberry County.

Thank you!

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