

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026





## Mission

Barnwell County First Steps works collaboratively to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential with engaged support from their parents, caregivers, and communities.

## Vision

We will be successful when all children reach their highest potential.

## Values

We engage families, caregivers, and community partners in high-quality programs and services that improve early childhood development, from birth through age 5. We also serve as a connector and convener of all early childhood stakeholders in Barnwell County.

# Message from the Executive Director



**Tricia Gordon**

Executive Director  
Barnwell County First Steps

Throughout the process of preparing our needs assessment and now our three-year strategic plan, we have been fortunate to have the support of our Board of Directors, our school districts, our childcare partners, and the greater community of Barnwell County supporting our work.

Preparing our children for kindergarten is our top priority. This goes hand in hand with supporting the families of Barnwell County with the resources need to raise their children to become successful, contributing members of our community.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tricia Gordon".

# 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 Barnwell County. See our full needs assessment here:

<https://www.scfirststeps.org/media/t2cdi1be/barnwell-county-fy24-26-needs-assessment.pdf>.

## 1. Childcare

Survey participants indicated that Barnwell County has a significant lack of quality, affordable childcare. The town of Williston is a childcare desert.

## 2. Community Resource Connections for Families

Respondents report that it is difficult for families to locate the appropriate resources when in need.

## 3. Transportation

Survey respondents indicated that transportation is a major hurdle in accessing resources for their families.

# Objectives

## **1. FAMILIES HAVE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILDCARE**

Families can access and afford high quality early care and education programs that meet the needs of their children and families.

## **2. FAMILIES CAN ACCESS COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Families with young children will have knowledge about and be able to access all publicly-funded programs, services, and resources for which they and their children are eligible.

## **3. FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION**

Families with young children will be assisted in locating and accessing local transportation options to obtain services both in Barnwell County and in the surrounding areas.

# Objective One: CHILDCARE

## ERADICATE THE CHILDCARE DESERT IN WILLISTON, SC

Barnwell County First Steps will establish a child care center in Williston, SC.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. Barnwell County First Steps will partner with the Barnwell Consolidated School District to open a child development center at Kelly Edwards School during FY'24..

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Barnwell County Consolidated School District

## ADD CHILDCARE SLOTS ACROSS BARNWELL COUNTY

Increase child care slots in Barnwell County.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. Barnwell County First Steps will support other childcare providers in adding child care slots to their centers to increase capacity for children to be in care across Barnwell County by the end of FY'26.
2. Assist new providers in becoming established childcare centers. We will assist one provider and have an additional center open by the end of FY'26.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Established childcare centers in Barnwell County.
- Community individuals beginning to open their centers.

# Objective Two: COMMUNITY RESOURCES

## Community Resource Connections for Families

Assist families with locating and accessing community resources.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. Establish a Family Resource Center for Barnwell County families with children aged 0-5 before the end of FY'25.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- The Well
- HEALing Partners
- Barnwell County Help Line
- Barnwell County Ministerial Association
- James and Miriam Darnell Committee
- Barnwell - Bamberg Baptist Association
- Save the Children
- Low Country Health Care Services
- Southeastern Housing and Community Development
- Cumbee Center



# Objective Three: TRANSPORTATION

## Transportation for Families

Assist families with locating and accessing transportation.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. Families with young children will be assisted in locating and accessing local transportation options to obtain services both in Barnwell County and in the surrounding areas by the end of FY'26.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Local Motion
- Lower Savannah Council of Governments
- Southeastern Housing & Community Development
- Barnwell County Council
- Local Municipalities

# Overarching Measure of Success

## **INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY BARNWELL COUNTY FIRST STEPS**

By 2026, the amount of children under age 6 who benefit from Barnwell County First Steps' mission to increase child care slots in Barnwell County will increase by 30 slots.

# Acknowledgments

Barnwell County First Steps would be remiss not to acknowledge the many contributors to our Strategic Plan. Our Board of Directors, our community partner agencies, our childcare providers, and most of all, our families have guided us in constructing this Strategic Plan to help better serve the families of Barnwell County during the next three years.

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