



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026





Mission

Collaborating with other entities, Lee County First Steps helps South Carolina families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private resources to ensure that children arrive at school healthy and ready to learn.

Vision

Every child will thrive and reach his/her greatest potential...



Values

Children make progress

LCFS is committed to ensuring that all children make progress towards achieving their potential, developing positive social-emotional, and enter school ready to succeed.

Individualized services and supports

LCFS provides individualized services and supports to children and their families.

LCFS respects the individuality of each child and family unique and benefits from choices and flexibility.

Accessible services

LCFS communicates with the various distinct school attendance zone communities and make services available to all children in Lee County free of charge and as early as possible.

Community-based services

LCFS provides educational services which provide children to achieve the greatest level most successful.

LCFS utilizes existing community resources and serves children with typical peers in natural environments if feasible or possible.

Exemplary leadership

LCFS serves as leaders in the educational field and models effective collaboration and effective competency for implementing research based and promising practices programs.

LCFS is a progressive and innovative state-funded, non-profit which implements innovative programs, and activities for children and families

LCFS continuously seeks to encourage staff learning, growth, develop, and improvement.

Relationships

LCFS builds positive relationships with families by using a strengths-based approach that includes concrete support in times of need, knowing where to turn for help, building resiliency amongst families.

LCFS is committed to creating optimism and hope for families.

LCFS seeks to listen to collaborating partners, and acknowledge their ideas, wishes, plans, and value-add to the community.

Respect for diversity of families

LCFS treats all families with dignity, honor and respect.

LCFS is committed to and values diversity of cultures, languages, customs, religion, family type, social and economic status, education, and thought.

Responsible and accountable use of resources

LCFS is responsible and resourceful in how the agency effectively manages and coordinates fiscal, technical, material, and human resources.

Community collaboration

LCFS develops relationships with community partners who play an integral role within the local community.

LCFS works collaboratively with countless local, regional, state, and national partners in order to make Lee County, SC, the USA, and the world a better place for children and families to thrive, live, work, and grow.

Community resource

LCFS is a valuable resource to the local community by providing high-quality trainings, on-site support, materials and supplies locally and regionally for the children and families that are served.

LCFS provides opportunities for volunteers, and for the staff to volunteer.

Partners with parents

LCFS supports parents in their role as parent, and respects families as partners in all aspects of the process.

LCFS values working together with parents as a team and facilitating a community of learning from all stakeholders.

LCFS acknowledges that parents are their child's first and most influential "teachers"

LCFS acknowledges that parents are their child's life-long advocates for their child.

Message from the Executive Director



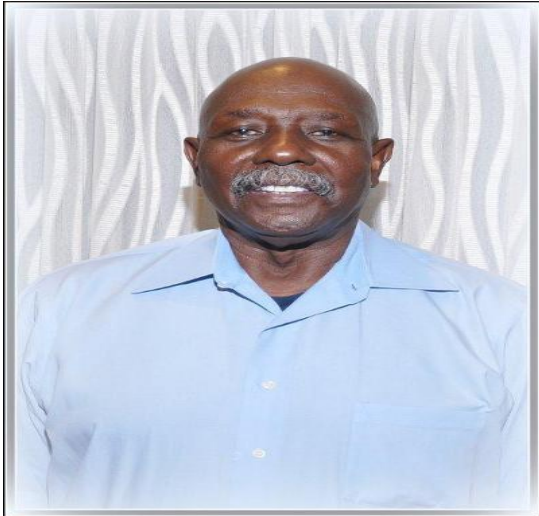
Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr., Ed.S.

Executive Director
Lee County First Steps

Lee County First Steps has taken a comprehensive approach to secure input from various stakeholders in this first phase of the Strategic Planning Process by comprehensively soliciting input from various stakeholders and collaborating partners of our agency and our local community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Message from the Board Chair



Andrew Moses
Board Chair
Lee County First Steps

Lee County First Steps is working to gain feedback from our parents, partners, and community. Our Board is committed to developing a Strategic Plan that addresses the needs of our community.

Andrew Moses

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



Priorities: Summary

Through a series of community convenings, a needs assessment and asset mapping process, the following needs were prioritized for Lee County. See our full needs assessment here:

<https://www.scfirststeps.org/media/ukblzyn3/final-lee-county-first-steps-fy24-26-needs-assessment-template-3-3-2023-updated-5-1-2023.pdf>

1. Childcare Desert

44% of Lee County is considered a childcare desert, and there is a need for more Infant and Toddler Childcare in the Lee County Community.

2. Readiness for Kindergarten

Surveys from parents, community service agencies indicate a need for childcare services to ensure children are ready for kindergarten.

3. Parenting and Family Skills

All surveyed including parents indicate a need for parenting skills and family centered childcare counseling included mental health counseling.

4. Local Community Infrastructure

Community responses from surveyed participants continue to identify Transportation as a priority. Also, more high quality and better jobs continue to be identified as a need of the community.

Objectives

- 1. Parents will be engaged in their child (ren) educational activities.**
- 2. To ensure children arrive at school ready to learn.**
- 3. Ensuring children arrive at school healthy and ready to learn.**
- 4. Create a coordinated and Family-Centered Early Childhood System.**

Objective One: Parents will be engaged in their child (ren) educational activities.

STRATEGY 1.1

PARENTS TO TEACHERS

Provide families with personal visits from a parent educator at least twice monthly.

SMART GOALS

- Increase the number of families enrolled in the Parents As Teachers Program by 3% each year thru 2026.
- In FY 24, FY 25, and FY 26, LCFS will participate in quarterly recruitment activities at PTA/ Open House, annual back to school events at feeder elementary schools and childcare facilities.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Community partners will include the DHEC-WIC program, Lee County Public and the Lee County Department of Social Services. Churches and civic organizations will also be a part of the recruiting process.

Objective One: Parents will be engaged in their child (ren) educational activities.

STRATEGY 1.2

Conduct monthly group connections with other PAT families to share information and connections to outside resources that families may need to succeed.

SMART GOAL

- Conduct at least 12 monthly group sessions with PAT families to share information and resources.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Community partners will include DHEC, Department of Social Services, Mental Health, Vroom partners, and other local resource

STRATEGY 1.3

PARENTS AS TEACHERS

SMART GOAL

- Each year, LCFS will provide PAT families with personal visits from a parent educator at least twice monthly.

Objective One: Parents will be engaged in their child (ren) educational activities.

COMMUNITIY COLLABORATORS

- Community partners will include the DHEC-WIC program, Lee County Public and the Lee County Department of Social Services. Churches and civic organizations will also be a part of the recruiting process.

STRATEGY 1.4

Promote brain building exercises for birth to 5 children through everyday interaction.

SMART GOAL

- Increase the participation level of families served by Raising a Reader Program by 5% by the end of FY26.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Community partners will include DHEC, Department of Social Services, Mental Health, and other local resource

Objective Two: To ensure children arrive at school ready to learn.

STRATEGY 2.1

COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN

Implement the Countdown to Kindergarten home visitation program pairing the families of rising kindergartens with their future teachers during the summer before school entry.

SMART GOAL

- Train at least 3 teachers each year beginning with FY 24 to conduct home visits with 30 rising kindergarteners.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR

- Community partner will include Lee County Public School kindergarten teachers.

STRATEGY 2.2

SMART GOALS

- By FY 26, LCFS will increase the number of children participating in the Countdown to Kindergarten Program by 30%.

Objective Two: To ensure children arrive at school ready to learn.

- LCFS will recruit children from parenting programs, teacher referral from Bishopville/Lee Child Development Center and Wateree Head Start – Bishopville Site.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Community partners will include Head Start, 4K Centers and other childcare programs where families have children who will be rising kindergarteners.

STRATEGY 2.3

SMART GOAL

- Ensure that each student enrolled in the CTK program receive six (6) home visits during the summer before school starts in FY 24.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR

- Community partner will include Lee County Public School kindergarten teachers.

Objective Three: Ensuring children arrive at school healthy and ready to learn.

STRATEGY 3.1

SMART GOAL

- Ensure that each student enrolled receive services to detect any development delays or health issues. LCFS will provide early childhood education services to pregnant women and children birth to 5 years.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Community partner will include Child Find, Baby Net and pediatricians

STRATEGY 3.2

SMART GOAL

- By FY 26, LCFS will increase the number of families in the Early Steps to School Success 10%.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR

- Lee County Public Schools

Objective Three: Ensuring children arrive at school healthy and ready to learn.

STRATEGY 1.1.2

Improve the quality of health care before, during, and after the birth of a child.

SMART GOALS

- By FY 26, assure care addresses social determinants of health and risk behavior reduction in 2% of birth mothers enrolled in a health advocacy and support system.
- By FY 26, enhance population surveillance to determine receipt of guideline-recommended care in 2% of birth mothers enrolled in a health advocacy and support system.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Community partner will include Child Find, Baby Net, pediatricians, and DHEC

Objective Four: Create a coordinated and Family-Centered Early Childhood System.

STRATEGY 4.1.6

Collaborate across agencies to pursue funding that results in additional investment in programs and services that benefit young children and their families or builds and strengthens the early childhood state system while ensuring the most effective and efficient use of state, federal and local resources.

SMART GOAL

- By FY 25, a collaboration across SC First Steps, Lee County School District and Lee County First Steps will open one child care center to serve 10 children of parents enrolled in the school district's Adult Education Program.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Community partner will include SC First Steps, and Lee County School District

STRATEGY 4.3.4

Work collaboratively to ensure the county's home visitors and parent educators receive training, professional development and support that strengths their practices and enhances their services for families and children.

Objective Four: Create a coordinated and Family-Centered Early Childhood System.

- By FY 26, the county's home visitors and parent educators will participant in three annual trainings and professional development opportunities to strengthen their practices and enhance their services for families and children.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

- Community partner will include SC First Steps, Save the Children, Lee County School District, National Parents As Teachers, South Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children (SCAEYC) and South Carolina Early Childhood Association (SCECA)

Overarching Measures of Success

1. INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES

By 2026, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Lee County First Steps will increase from 17% to 20%.

2. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HIGH INTENSITY PROGRAMS FUNDED BY FIRST STEPS

By 2026, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Lee County First Steps high intensity programs will increase from 5% to 8%.

3. INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY FIRST STEPS

By 2026, the percentage of children under age 6 who benefit from Lee County First Steps quality enhancement and training efforts will increase from 12% to 15%.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the Lee County First Steps Board, Staff, local and regional community participants who were willing to provide valuable and meaningful feedback as Lee County First Steps provides programs and services to children and their families.

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