



Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund III (ESSER III) Parenting Expansion Targeted Grant

Deadline

October 29, 2021 by 5:00PM

Access and submit application at: https://scfirststeps.surveymonkey.com/r/ESSER_parenting_grant

Parents are a child's first teacher, and today's already overwhelmed parents have experienced additional stressors due to the pandemic that can significantly impact their children's healthy development and school readiness. Furthermore, many national researchers are warning about the pandemic's disproportionate effects on low income families and families of color, including the national RISER (Researchers Investigating Sociocultural Equity and Race) Network, Child Trends, Center for Law and Social Policy, and others.

First Steps local partnerships' largest state-funded investment is in evidence-based parenting programs, in particular home visiting models such as Parents as Teachers. While we know that these intensive parenting models have demonstrated school readiness outcomes nationally through experimental and quasi-experimental studies, we also know that First Steps has a solid track record of implementing these programs to fidelity and achieving similar results. According to a 2019 study by USC's Institute for Families in Society, children in general education who received First Steps local partnership services were **74% more likely to score Demonstrating Readiness** on the KRA, and **34% less likely to be chronically absent** in kindergarten, compared to their like-peers who did not receive First Steps services. Similar results were seen with children in special education (https://www.scfirststeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/FirstSteps2019Eval_ExecSummary.pdf).

Because of the high need for intensive, evidence-based parenting programs within large areas of South Carolina, and the demonstrated capacity of local First Steps partnerships to implement such programs to fidelity and achieve positive school readiness outcomes, South Carolina South Carolina First Steps received a three-year allocation of federal ESSER III funding from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to **address learning loss by expanding evidence-based parenting supports**.

Parenting Expansion Grants:

South Carolina First Steps intends to award grants to local partnerships to address learning loss due to the pandemic by **establishing** or **expanding** high-intensity, evidence-based parenting programs. These include home visiting and group parenting models that have been approved as evidence-based by the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees and have written standards within the SC First Steps FY22 Program and Operational Guidelines. Eligible programs include:

- Early Steps to School Success
- Healthy Families America
- Incredible Years
- Language ENvironment Analysis (LENA)
- Nurse-Family Partnership
- Nurturing Parenting Program (Home Visiting)
- Nurturing Parenting Program (Parent Groups)
- Parents as Teachers

- Parent Child+
- Strengthening Families
- Triple P (level 4)

All local First Steps partnerships that have no current Corrective Actions, or have received a state board waiver for their FY22 Corrective Action prior to the application deadline, are eligible to apply.

Eligible local partnerships may apply singularly, and/or as part of a multi-county application. Multi-county applications must select a lead partnership to be the applicant and provide evidence that each participating local partnership has formerly agreed to participate.

Funding is available to fully support the expansion of existing programs, or establish new programs, within many communities in South Carolina. South Carolina First Steps has \$1.5-\$1.7 million per year in ESSER III funding allocated to this grant program; additionally, Preschool Development Grant funding may be added to the overall funding pool to increase the number of awards made.

To help you determine a good fit for expanding a current program or establishing a new program strategy in your community, the SC First Steps parenting team has scheduled virtual “open meetings.” This is an opportunity for you to stop in, discuss and ask questions about any of the parenting programs eligible for funding. The “open meeting” schedule and Zoom links are listed below. Registration is not required.

Monday, September 13, 9:00 - 10:00AM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86259773322?pwd=WFNWL01JYlpGSllwM3U2WEwyRjk1Zz09>

Monday, September 13, 1:00 – 2:00 PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88577762423?pwd=a3pFTUZleWx3eC94dUp6OHgrMkxZQT09>

Wednesday, September 15, 9:00 – 10:00AM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85776536567?pwd=UmJ0Q2x0bmFpTjdTSjNIU2laNkxpZz09>

Targeting and Numbers Served

This funding is to be targeted to low-income children ages 0-5, who research demonstrates have been disproportionately negatively impacted by the pandemic in terms of learning loss and family instability due to unemployment, health concerns, etc. Additionally, SC First Steps’ ESSER III contract with SCDE prioritizes funding to geographic areas of our state whose children consistently score below the state average for “Demonstrating Readiness” on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), have the greatest achievement gaps for demonstrating readiness between white children and children of color, or are in rural areas. Therefore, it is recommended that counties with lower percentages of children in poverty target their funding request to serve a specific underserved population or populations within their county, such as targeting by zip code or by a demographic category such as teen parents, incarcerated parents, etc.

South Carolina First Steps’ statewide numbers served targets for this funding are:

Parents as Teachers

- Expand services by **144** or more children 0-5 per year among existing PAT affiliates
- Expand services by **36** or more children 0-5 per year among new PAT affiliates

Other Parenting Models (from those listed above)

- Expand services by **300** or more children 0-5 per year among existing and new programs

Local partnerships should use the following guidance when developing their target numbers served per year:

1. **Follow model standards** for caseload/group size.
 - a. For home visiting programs, the expectation is 15-20 families served per full-time parent educator, and for the parent educator to continually serve a full caseload of families.
 - b. For group parenting programs, follow model standards for group size and consider providing multiple group cohorts during the year, at different locations within the county, and/or at different times to meet the needs of families with varying schedules.
2. **Be ambitious (but realistic)** about the number of families from the target population you can recruit and retain long enough to achieve model fidelity and outcomes. Take into consideration how many other parenting programs exist in your county that serve the same population. Consider what types of parenting programs are operating in your county (home visiting, group), the ages they serve, and where they are located and address the service gaps that exist.

Plan for, and include in your funding request if needed:

- a. Resources to recruit and retain a qualified, sustainable workforce for your program(s)
- b. Resources to recruit and retain families (marketing materials, outreach activities, participation incentives)
- c. Resources to remove barriers to participation: securing locations for parent groups, assisting with transportation, child care during program operations, etc.

Minimum and Maximum Funding and Duration:

There is no set minimum or maximum award, but it is the intent of SC First Steps that this funding benefit as many local partnerships as possible, particularly local partnerships serving rural counties/areas, high poverty areas, areas underserved by parenting programs, and school districts with KRA scores consistently below the state average.

There is no limit to the number of parenting programs a local partnership may apply for, as long as the local partnership has, or will with grant funding, the capacity and resources to recruit the workforce members and families necessary to meet numbers served targets and otherwise operate the program(s) with fidelity. This capacity needs to be evident in the application materials submitted.

The purpose of ESSER Parenting Expansion Targeted Grant funding is to **increase** the number of children and parents/caregivers served in high-intensity, evidence-based parenting programs. Therefore, the target numbers to be served with this grant must be **in addition to** the local partnership's target numbers served for all other funding in FY22, including state formula funding, targeted and competitive funding through SC First Steps, and all other outside funding. If awarded, local partnerships may not reduce the amount of funding currently allocated to the funded program(s), or reduce the program's Projected to Serve targets, without first seeking approval from their assigned Program Officer.

Awarded programs can expect to receive funding for **three program years** - 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 – assuming that a) the local partnership achieves satisfactory grant performance with meeting numbers served targets and model fidelity; b) the local partnership is in overall compliance with its annual grant agreement with SC First Steps, with any future Corrective Actions addressed successfully and expediently; and c) SC First Steps' contract with SCDE for ESSER III funding remains in effect.

Allowable Uses of Parenting Expansion Funding:

Parenting Expansion funding may be used for expenditures related to the funded program(s) achieving its deliverables for model fidelity and outcomes.

Parenting Expansion Grants are subject to the following conditions:

General

- Grant funds will be coded separately in the partnership's Budget Spending Plan, using Fund Code(s) provided by SC First Steps.
- Unlike the Local Partnership's formula funding allocation, Parenting Expansion Grant funding will **not** be included in percentage calculations used to assess compliance with restrictions for expenditures within Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed programs, Core Functions, or Administrative Expenses.
- Because Parenting Expansion Grant funding will consist of federal funds, Parenting Expansion Grants **can** be counted towards Local Partnerships' 15% match requirement.
- Matching funds are not required for this grant competition, but if applicable should be reflected in the proposed budget.
- Parenting Expansion Grant funding must be expended by June 30 each year. Unexpended grant funds after this date may be recaptured by SC First Steps.
- Multi-partnership applications are encouraged, but must name one local partnership to be the lead applicant.
- Parenting Expansion-funded projects must comply with all applicable SC First Steps Program and Operational Guidelines, including requirements for data collection within the First Steps Data Collection System.

Shared Costs/Cost Allocation

Applicants may propose a reasonable allocation of Parenting Expansion Grant funds toward shared costs, taking into consideration:

- Whether the Local Partnership is the lead applicant or a participating partnership
- Whether the project includes creating a new program vs. expanding an existing program that is already cost allocated within the Partnership's budget
- Duration of the proposed program
- The number of other programs offered by the partnership
- No administrative or indirect percentage may be charged. Administrative costs must be included as line items in the application budget and described in detail.
- Final awards will consider the cost per client for similar programs and the overall cost-benefit of the project to children, families, providers, and the community

Personnel Costs

- Parenting Expansion Grant funds may be used to fund new program staff positions or increase the hours worked per week or scope of work (up to 40, w/o overtime) of existing staff. Consider providing compensation rates and benefits that are competitive with similar programs locally, in order to recruit and retain qualified staff.
- Grant funds may be used to increase the compensation rates of existing supervisory staff, if the staff in question 1) take on significant additional responsibilities as a result of the funded program(s); and 2) only supervise staff within the funded program(s).

Equipment/Renovation/Capital Projects

- Local Partnerships may not use Parenting Expansion grant funding for new construction. Equipment or renovation costs necessary to implement the program may be considered on an individual basis, but such requests must be discussed with Betty Gardiner, Director of Grantmaking and Development and Mark Barnes, Director of Administration, prior to submitting an application.
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How to Apply:

Go to the Parenting Expansion Targeted Grant [application](#), where you will find the online application form and templates for the following required attachments:

1. **Grant Budget Form and Instructions:** applicants will submit a Start-up/Partial Year budget for 2021-22, and a full-year Implementation Budget for 2022-23 and 2023-24.
2. **Cover Page** certifying local board approval (if accomplished by the application deadline)*
3. Multi-county applications must also attach a letter of commitment from each participating partnership certifying their commitment to the program.

Note the application form requires written responses to **just four prompts:**

1. How many families do you project to serve each year?
2. Describe the need for additional family support services in the proposed community. For example, current capacity to serve families is limited or existing wait list for service.
3. Describe how you will recruit families.
4. Describe how you will recruit new workforce members to support implementation (if not applicable, put 'N/A').

Please be succinct, but also specific and thorough in your responses.

Before starting the online application, the below checklist may be helpful to organize your materials before opening the online application. SurveyMonkey will save your responses while you are completing the application, so you can go to previous screens to edit as you need during that browser session. If you exit the browser or submit your application, you will not be able to go back and make changes. If any changes are needed, please communicate them to Betty Gardiner (bgardiner@scfirststeps.org).

CHECKLIST:

- Single or multi-county application? If multi-county, which county is the lead? Parenting program?
- Responses to prompts planned/written
- Three-year budget template completed and saved as PDF
- Cover page for lead county completed, signed and saved as PDF
- If multi-county application, letter of commitment from each county obtained

Once you press 'Submit Grant Application' twice and are redirected to the First Steps homepage, your application has been successfully submitted.

IMPORTANT: Submit one application for each program you are requesting funding. For example, if your local partnership wishes to apply to expand Parents as Teachers and establish an Incredible Years program, you would submit two applications, each with their separate budget. The same signature page may be attached, as long as all of the programs applied for are referenced on the signature page.

***Local Board Approval:**

It is important that local partnership boards review and approve plans to establish or expand programs. Given the tight turnaround for applications, SC First Steps will consider applications without the Signature Page provided, as long as the local board meets and approves the application prior to funds being awarded. SC First Steps recommends that EDs make their board members aware of their proposed application(s) and discuss with their board chair, executive committee, and/or program committee prior to submission.