



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026





Mission

Our mission is to support families in Lexington County so that all children enter school ready to learn.

Vision

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

Values

The years of early childhood are a critical window of development during which much human potential is shaped.

Families are the single most important influence on the development of their young children.

School readiness is the result of a child's development in many areas, with each contributing to the child's success.

Services must be individualized and adaptable to meet the unique needs of children and families.

We value, and demonstrate, in our collaborative work and advocacy, diverse perspectives in the development of public policy and programs.

Message from the Executive Director

Lexington County First Steps (LCFS) began in 2001 and it has been defined as filling gaps, enhancing and enlarging services and serving the most at-risk children through the collective wisdom of collaborations and partnerships across Lexington County. There is a particularly strong relationship between LCFS and each of the county's five school districts. Lexington County School District 3 has provided in-kind space for LCFS since 2004 and the District processes our payroll and benefits. We are indebted to Lexington 3 for this extraordinary partnership.

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an evidenced-based home visitation model used by LCFS since inception of First Steps. It is the flagship of our county services and is the largest PAT program in South Carolina, partnering with each of the five school district's Parenting Centers.

Another long-standing home visitation program is Countdown to Kindergarten; a summer transition program for 5K students-to-be in the fall of each year. Due to COVID restrictions, this program was not offered in the summer of 2020. It returned in the summer of 2021, FY22.

Other Program Services include PASOS, an outreach for all immigrant families needing to navigate available services in Lexington County, This service is an outreach to Latino families specifically. Also, in FY22, child care providers' training was coordinated thru Palmetto Shared Services Alliance. We also work with SCFS in 4K expansion to childcare centers.



James H. Riddle, Jr. MHA
Executive Director
Lexington County First Steps

Message from the Board Chair

Countless research supports the urgency with which preschool aged children must be surrounded by rich experiences, not only in literacy and numeracy, but they must also have ample opportunities for motor development and social/emotional development in order to be ready for school. Lexington County First Steps strives to support families across the county in order to provide these types of experiences for parents and children.

Through programs such as Parents As Teachers, Lexington County First Steps provides highly qualified personnel to work with children and families prior to entering school. Our trained parent educators play a vital role in assisting parents with creating engaging experiences that are developmentally appropriate. They also provide valuable resources to promote school readiness as well as connections to local organizations that help support a child's development.

Providing group connections across Lexington County in partnership with all five school districts builds community and strengthens protective factors for our children and their parents. Examples include: Riverbanks Zoo, Saluda Shoals, Edventure, and Kids Day in Lexington.

The Countdown to Kindergarten program in Lexington County allows for educators to develop relationships with families of the youngest learners in our community. This program assists with the successful transition of these children into the school environment.

It is a true privilege to serve on this board as I am confident that Lexington County First Steps is committed to making a difference in school readiness for our children.



Mary Brooks, M. ED
Board Chair
Lexington County First Steps

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 Lexington County. [See our full needs assessment here: <link>](#).

1. IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Strategies discussed included: Improve access to health care and education, medical/dental, cleanliness, vaccines, well checks, address food insecurity, provide general nutrition education, increase transportation, include mobile medical units, provide education and resources to new mothers, medical visits, county programs, implement master list of resources for parents and providers, implement partnerships, food programs with local farmers, pairing with SNAP.

2. REDUCE THE GAP OF CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT ENROLLED IN QUALITY CHILDCARE PROGRAMS.

Strategies discussed included: advocate for businesses to promote childcare programs in the rural communities, provide access to quality professional development for childcare workers across the county, and educate families about voucher programs, and scholarships to increase affordability for childcare.

Priority Needs: Summary

3. INCREASE CAPACITY BUILDING AMONG PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS.

Strategies discussed included: Help parents understand their roles as Parents and acquire effective parenting skills, by hosting more parenting workshops, and parent/child programs for families within the community, beyond the families being served with the home visitation program, Provide additional funding for Parents as Teachers in order to provide services targeting all parents, not just those receiving PAT home visiting services, and increase awareness of First Steps services and effectively advertise resources available to parents in order to recruit and support parents in connecting and interacting with their children and understanding the importance of these connections and interactions.

Objectives

1. IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

2. INCREASE VISIBILITY OF LEXINGTON COUNTY FIRST STEPS.

3. REDUCE THE GAP OF CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT ENROLLED IN ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE PROGRAMS.

Objective One: IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

STRATEGY 1.1

Partner with Lexington Medical Center, other pediatric practices, and the library to create a Lexington County Board Book (“Lexington Baby”) to promote reading and resources to new caregivers.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2024, the book will be ready for distribution.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Lexington County medical providers, Lexington County Health Department, Lexington County Library, First5 SC, will be some of the community partners engaged on this project.

STRATEGY 1.2

Implement distribution of baby book to health providers to catch parents either at birth or at the first doctor’s visit.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2025, we will have distributed 4,000 Lexington Baby books throughout Lexington County.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- All the previous community collaborators for this objective in addition to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, and others.

Objective One: IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

STRATEGY 1.3

Evaluate progress of program and determine value of continuation.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2026, an evaluation of the pilot Lexington Baby Board Book project will be completed.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Previous partners of this project will continue to be engaged.

Objective Two: INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF LEXINGTON COUNTY FIRST STEPS

STRATEGY 2.1

Continue to provide exceptional programs (Parents as Teachers, Connected Families, Countdown to Kindergarten, Quality Counts, PASOs, Lexington Baby Board Book) to families in Lexington County.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2026, all of our programs will reach or exceed enrollment goals.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- The five Lexington County School Districts, State of South Carolina, and others included in our asset map.

STRATEGY 2.2

Update and monitor online presence.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2024, our website and social medias will be updated to reflect current events and programming.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Splash Media will be consulted for updates and maintenance of our website.

Objective Three: REDUCE THE GAP OF CHILDREN NOT ENROLLED IN ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

STRATEGY 3.1

Explore partnerships with Newberry County for hiring a position for Quality Counts.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2024, a part-time Quality Counts Coordinator will be hired.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- Newberry County will be our community collaborator on this.

STRATEGY 3.2

Provide Access to quality professional development for childcare workers.

SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2026, we will expand our trainings to at least one center in every school district.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- All five school districts and local childcare centers will be part of this process.

Overarching Measure(s) of Success

MORE CHILDREN ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN READY FOR SUCCESS

By 2025, the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will increase by 2% each year to 40.4%.

Acknowledgments

Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Lexington County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

FUNDING SUPPORT

State of South Carolina: 594,362

South Carolina Endeavors (formerly CCCCD): 2,000

United Way of the Midlands Unrestricted: 1,539

LCFS Staff & Board of Directors: 370

PASOS Latino Outreach: 57450

IN-KIND SUPPORT

Lexington One: 124,992

Lexington Two: 151,850

Lexington Three: 82,329

Lexington Four: 44,702

Lexington Five: 86,750

Total 490,623

Acknowledgments

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