

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2026





## Mission

Connecting families to resources they need for their children to be safe, healthy, and ready for school.

## Vision

All children enter school with the tools necessary to succeed.

## Values

**Children:** We focus on the child because we want everyone to thrive.

**Families:** We support the family to help them succeed and treat them with dignity and respect.

**Collaboration:** We collaborate for impact to connect and get work done that helps all children to be safe and to be ready for school.

# Message from the Executive Director and Board Chair

It is our pleasure to introduce Union County First Steps' Strategic Plan. This plan was created with great care, recognizing the significance of each priority, strategy, and objective.

We listened to several families, community leaders, parents, and early childhood experts' concerns to help shape our understanding of the needs that must be addressed by Union County First Steps. Those opinions were contributed through a two-month process involving meetings, surveys, and retreats. During the process, we were able to refresh our values to better align with our mission and vision statements.

This plan extends our commitment to the children and families of Union County. As our mission states, we vow to continue "connecting families to resources they need for their children to be safe, healthy, and ready for school." Union County First Steps appreciates the support of our many community partners that contribute to carrying out this mission within our community!



*Nicole Glenn*

**Nicole Glenn**  
Executive Director  
Union County First Steps



*Amanda Newton*

**Amanda Newton**  
Board Chair  
Union County First Steps 3

# 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 Union County. See our full needs assessment here:

<https://www.scfirststeps.org/media/pa1g5jik/union-county-fy24-26-needs-assessment-pdf.pdf>

## **1. BUILD TRUST WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY.**

Participants stressed how important trust is needed especially with working with populations experiencing childhood trauma and poverty. One participant shared that “you can’t teach kids skills that the parents don’t have.” Participants identified parent engagement and parent training were critical and the Union County First Steps needed to establish trust with the parents before moving forward.

## **2. CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION IN BOTH UNION AND SPARTANBURG COUNTY.**

The leadership discussed several existing partnerships and collaborations that need to be strengthened including, but not limited to: KidsFest, backpack program, book give aways, Pregnancy Center, city, and county government. Participants shared that targeting pediatricians and health care providers in Spartanburg County will increase the awareness of Union County First Steps.

## **3. CONTINUOUSLY WRAP AROUND THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN, AND CHILD MOVING THROUGH THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS.**

Participants stressed the importance of moving from a reactive model to a preventative approach that “wraps” a child from the very beginning until they graduate high school. Throughout the process, Union County First Steps and local partners will need to make adjustments based off what is working and what is not working.

## Objectives

**1. IMPROVE THE FAMILY HAND-OFF AND GRADUATION PROCESS.**

**2. STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

**3. INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS**

# Objective One: IMPROVE FAMILY HAND-OFF AND GRADUATION PROCESS.

## STRATEGY 1.1

Evaluate current programs for ability to meet parents' needs.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2025 all current programs will be evaluated for participant satisfaction and results.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- The State Office will provide guidance as needed.

## STRATEGY 1.2

Establish contact at the local elementary schools.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2024 Union County First Steps will have made contact with every local elementary school.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- The local elementary schools and school district will be the primary collaborators on this strategy.

# **Objective One: IMPROVE FAMILY HAND-OFF AND GRADUATION PROCESS.**

## **STRATEGY 1.3**

Plug graduating families into resources they will need after First Steps.

### **SMART GOAL(S)**

1. By the end of FY2026 Union County First Steps will have a comprehensive graduation packet to assist families post-First Steps.

### **COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)**

- The school district, library, and local organizations will be the first collaborators engaged on this project.



# Objective Two: STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

## STRATEGY 2.1

Create an on-boarding process for board members and onboard current board members.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2025 all board members will be officially on-boarded.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- The State Office and a local consultant will be contacted for best board practices.

## STRATEGY 2.2

Establish contact with local organizations.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2026 three local organizations will have regular contact with Union County first Steps.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- DSS, DHEC, and United Way will be reached out to first for promoting collaboration.

# Objective Two: STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

## STRATEGY 2.3

Explore out of county partnership options that align with our values.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By FY2026 Union County First Steps will have established an out-of-county partner.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- We will consult with organizations in Spartanburg County and other local First Steps Partnerships to see our options.

# Objective Three: INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS

## STRATEGY 3.1

Establish consistent messaging with parents.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By the end of FY2026, 80% of all participants surveyed will know what we do and recognize our brand.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- The State Office, Facebook, and 4Imprint will be utilized to help with this strategy.

## STRATEGY 3.2

Conduct a Union County Parents Needs Assessment.

### SMART GOAL(S)

1. By FY2025 a parent needs assessment will be published.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)

- The school district, DSS, DHEC, Union County community members, and local childcare centers can be engaged in this process.

# **Objective Three: INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS**

## **STRATEGY 3.3**

Improve the parent feedback loop.

### **SMART GOAL(S)**

1. By FY2024 two different feedback mechanisms will be established to assess parental opinion.

### **COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR(S)**

- The State Office will be consulted as needed to achieve this.

## 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 30.6%.

# Acknowledgments

ISI Consulting  
Early Childhood Council Members  
Union County First Steps Board of Directors  
Union County School District  
Union County Library System  
Union County families

The project described was supported through South Carolina First Steps by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0080-02-01 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.