

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2024 – 2026



Acknowledgments

Thanks so much to the following members of the Richland County community who participated in our Needs Assessment process:

Rep. Annie McDaniel, District 41

Dr. Craig Witherspoon, Richland One Superintendent

Carl Blackstone, Columbia Chamber of Commerce

Deborah DePaoli, Institute for Child Success

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Lee Patterson, Richland Library

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Central Carolina Community Foundation staff

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Message from the Executive Director



MARCIA W. BACON
Chief Executive Officer
Richland First Steps

We are excited about the community partners, Board members, staff, and others who have helped us with this assessment of the needs of young children and their families in Richland County. What a great start to our Comprehensive Plan.

Marcia W. Bacon, CEO

Needs Assessment Process

CONVENE

Held community convenings with nearly 100 participants and developed 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



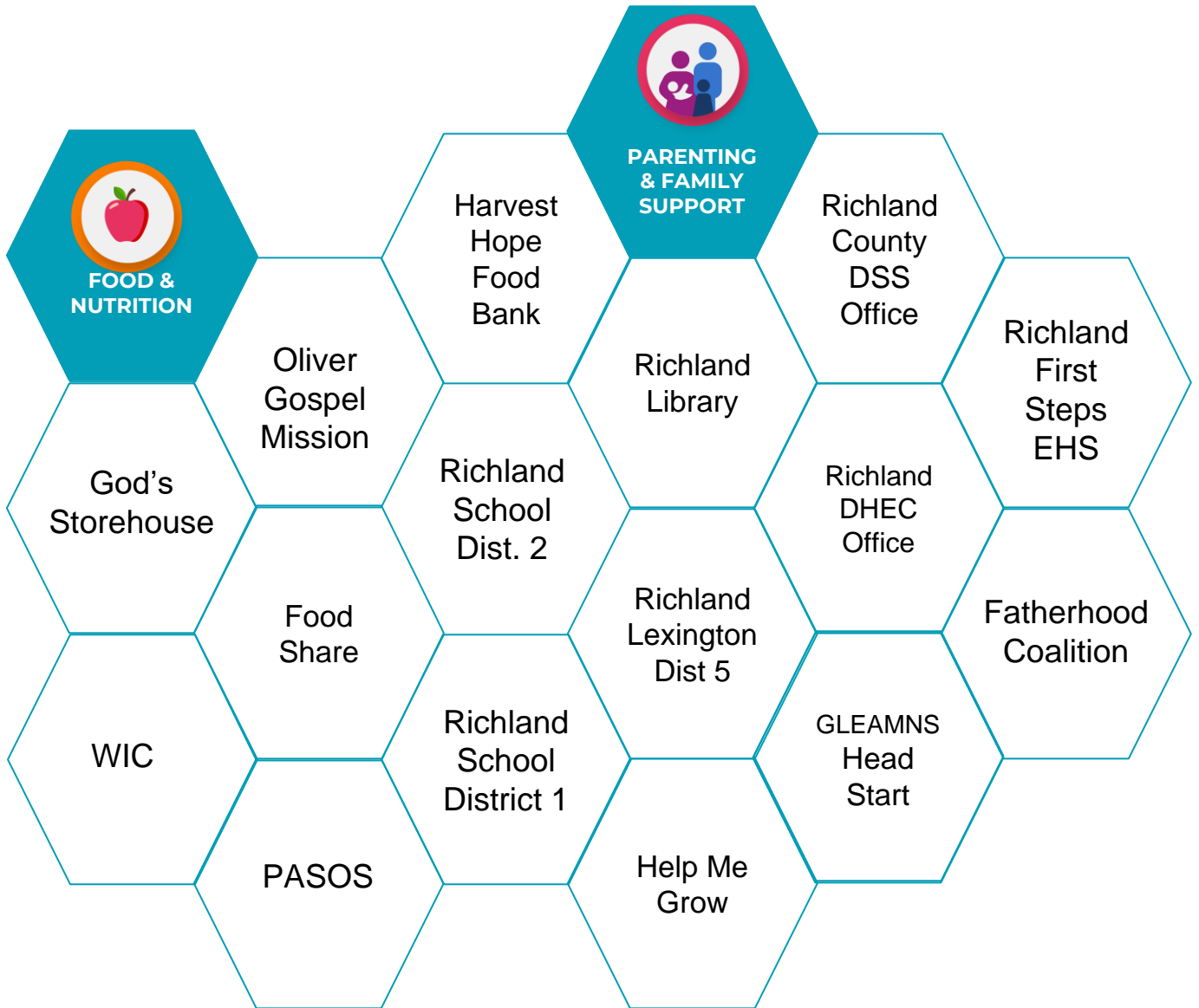
PRIORITIZE

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



Asset Map



Asset Map





Child Care Centers

Midlands Technical College

First Steps 4K

Thrive Richland

ABC Quality

USC

Palmetto Shared Services

Richland First Steps

Richland DSS

CCR&R

Priorities: Summary

1. ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE QUALITY CHILD CARE

Working families need child care that is safe, affordable, and accessible to them.

2. EARLY INTERVENTION, MENTAL HEALTH, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

In addition to traditional early intervention services for developmental delays, more services for child mental and behavioral health are needed.

3. UNDERSTANDING CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Parents and child care teachers need more information about young children's developmental milestones and how they can help children be ready to thrive in school.

4. STABLE FAMILIES WITH SAFE, SECURE HOMES

Family instability can negatively impact children's school readiness. Safe, secure housing and family support services can help.

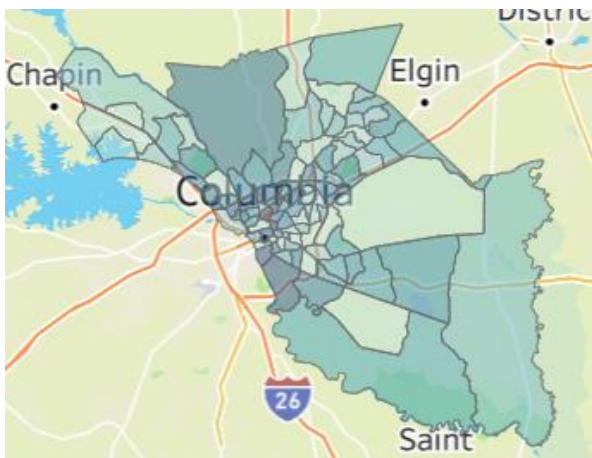
Priority One: Access to affordable quality child care

Child care deserts in Richland County are concentrated in areas of highest poverty

(SC B-5 Early Childhood Needs Assessment Data)

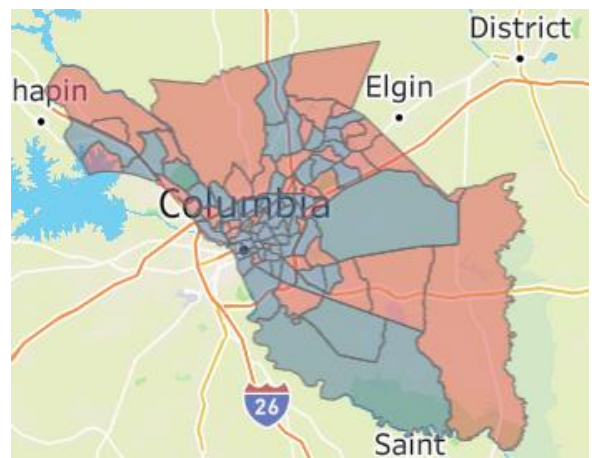
There is not enough capacity within licensed child care programs in Richland County to serve all children under 5. In 2022, there were 18,342 spaces available at licensed programs, but based on 2020 Census Bureau estimates there were more than 24,000 children under 5 living in the county.

The lack of child care is at its worst in areas of poverty, as shown by the maps below.



0.0% 100.0%

Percentage of population under 6 living at <185% of Federal Poverty Level



Census tracts identified as child care deserts

Priority One: Access to affordable quality child care

Lack of high quality child care (SCChildCare.org)

12%

Percentage of child care slots in Richland County that are in ABC Quality Level A or above programs

Of the 18,342 licensed child care capacity in the county, only 2,194 of those slots are in programs with an ABC Quality Rating of A or A+.

More 3K child care needed

(anecdotal from parents, our EHS staff, community members)

Families enrolled in Richland First Steps Early Head Start programs report during transition planning that they are unable to find space for their children in Head Start or school district 3K programs. There are fewer spots in Head Start classrooms than Early Head Start in Richland County. And school district 3K classrooms are limited and only for those who qualify.

Priority Two: Early Intervention, Mental Health, and Behavioral Health Services

Among children living below 100% of the federal poverty level, more than 1 in 5 (22%) had a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

US Centers for Disease Control*

Among children aged 2-8 years, boys were more likely than girls to have a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.



1 in 6 children aged 2-8 years has a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

South Carolina leads the nation in Pre-K expulsion and suspension rates

Exclusionary Discipline in U.S. Public Pre-K Programs*, Arizona State University

With an exclusionary discipline rate of 13.07 per 1000 students enrolled, South Carolina's rate is six and a half times the national average. Further, the study shows that nationwide, Black boys are disproportionately affected by these policies.

Priority Three: Stable Families with Safe, Secure Homes

Richland County has the second highest homelessness rate in the state.

South Carolina Interagency on Homelessness, 2020 SC State of Homelessness Report

The average sale price of a home in Richland County was \$240,000 in January 2023. The [fair market rent](#) for a 3-bedroom unit is \$1236 per month.

1.6% of children in South Carolina lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

America's Health Rankings analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Homeless Education, Federal Data Summary, United Health Foundation

\$54,441

Median annual household income in Richland County
US Census Bureau

\$64,397

Annual household income a family with 2 parents, an infant, and a preschooler would need to reach self-sufficiency
[United Way](#)

Priority Four: Understanding child development

Parents and caregivers need a greater understanding of child development.

Community and staff meeting responses

It's often said that children don't come with owner's manuals, but the truth is there is no shortage of people who are willing to tell parents what to do. In fact, there are so many voices that it is sometimes hard for parents and caregivers to discern good advice from bad.



Influencer culture often creates unrealistic expectations that are not in line with developmentally sound practice.

211

Visits to the Richland First Steps online resource library in Q4 2022

Next Steps



PLAN

Write 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