

**1.105.** (SDE: READY Program) Funds for the Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) program must be awarded by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees to First Steps local partnerships through a competitive and targeted grants process. Grant awards must prioritize evidenced-based programs for children from birth through age three who live in rural communities and in communities where kindergarten readiness scores are consistently below the state average. Of the funds appropriated, no more than ten percent may be distributed to any one county, and no more than three percent may be retained by the Office of First Steps for administering, monitoring, and evaluating the program. An annual report on the state's investment in early learning and development must be provided by the Office of First Steps to the General Assembly and the Governor by June 30, 2023.