



ACS Data

Driving Needs Assessments, Strategic Planning, and Funding Allocations for Early Childhood Programs in South Carolina

Chelsea Richard, PhD, MSPH
Director of Research and Strategy
2023 ACS Data Users Conference



The Need

South Carolina's long-term prosperity depends on the health and well-being of our state's 342,000 babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. Every one of them deserves a chance to reach their highest potential, but too few are getting what they need from the start.

Last year in South Carolina:

45%

of children ages 0-5
lived in poverty or
low-income households

55%

of children ages 3-4
were not enrolled in
preschool

10%

of babies were born
with low birthweight

50%

of children ages 0-5
were read to less
than 4 days per week

64%

of rising kindergartners
tested "not ready" for
school

The Need

South Carolina's long-term prosperity depends on the health and well-being of our state's 342,000 babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. Every one of them deserves a chance to reach their highest potential, but too few are getting what they need from the start.

Last year in South Carolina:

45%

of children ages 0-5
lived in poverty or
low-income households

55%

of children ages 3-4
were not enrolled in
preschool

10%

of babies were born
with low birthweight

50%

of children ages 0-5
were read to less
than 4 days per week

64%

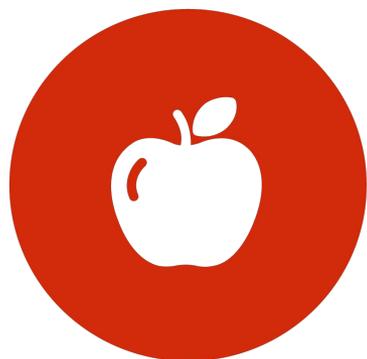
of rising kindergartners
tested "not ready" for
school

Getting Children Ready For School



Established in 1999 as a public-private partnership, South Carolina First Steps is the state's only dedicated, comprehensive early childhood initiative focused on getting children ready for school and life success. As both a state agency and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we work with families, early educators, and partners statewide to support children from birth through age five.

Our Approach



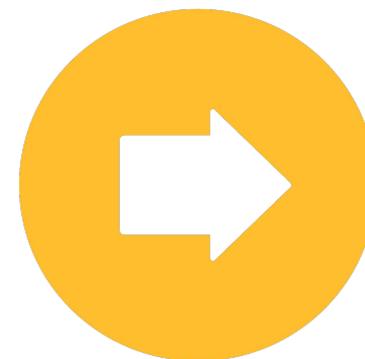
HEALTH



PARENTING



**EARLY CARE &
EDUCATION**



**SCHOOL
TRANSITION**

We take a holistic approach to accomplishing our mission, offering services that improve children's health, strengthen families, expand access to quality child care, increase participation in four-year-old kindergarten, and help transition rising kindergartners into school.

What We Do



Through a network of 46 **local partnerships**, we provide direct services and serve as local hubs for early childhood resources and referrals.



First Steps 4K provides free **four-year-old kindergarten** to qualifying children in licensed child care centers and private schools across the state.



We convene and operate the **Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)**, a collaborative body representing the state's early childhood system.

Using ACS Data

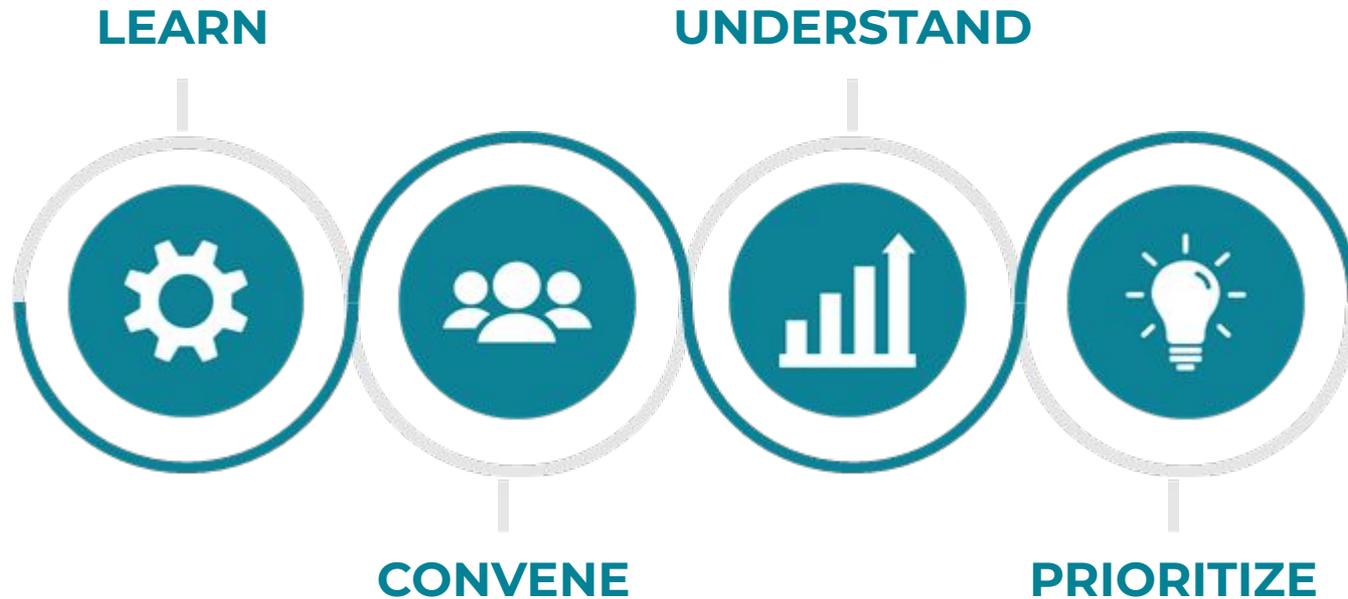
First Steps Local Partnerships

Every Three Years	Annually
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Needs Assessments● Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Formula Funding Allocation● Overarching Measures of Success

State developed and supported

- Templates
- Data Dashboards
- Infographics

Assessing and Prioritizing Needs



Dynamic Tableau Dashboards

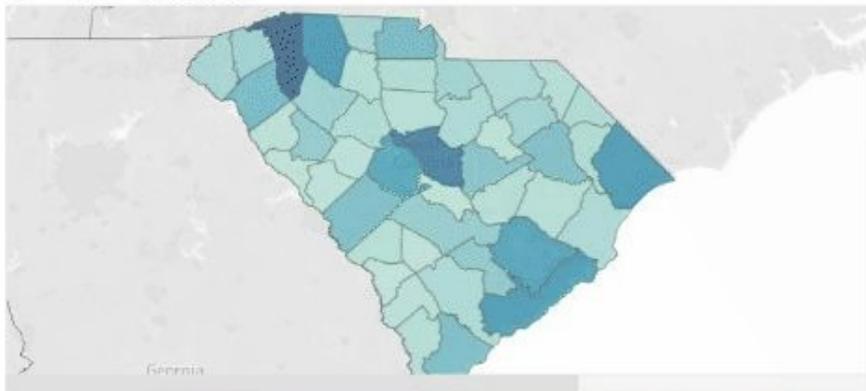
At the County Level

SC B-5 Early Childhood Needs Assessment

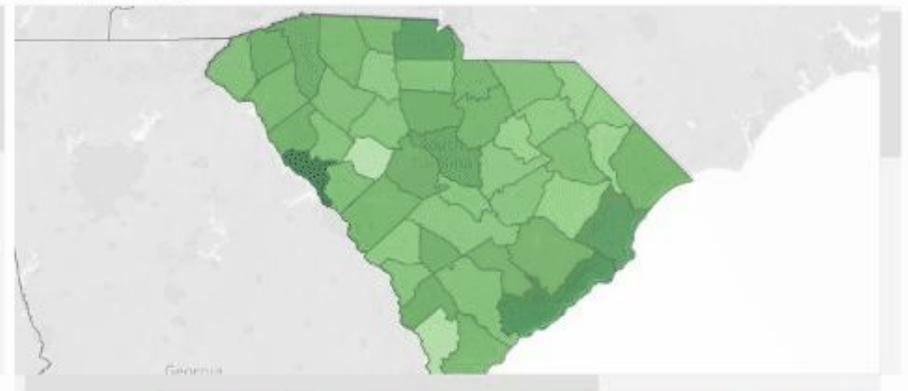
Navigation tabs:

- MAPS: Compare county distribution of two measures
- BARS: Compare distribution of two measures
- MAPS: Explore census tracts in a county or counties
- MAP: Explore child care access in a county or counties
- MAP & BARS: Kindergarten readiness by school

Select a M... Population Under Age 6 <185% FPL (Count) Select a Ye... 2020 Select a De... Overall Select a M... Kindergarten Ready (Rate) Select a Ye... 2021 Select a De... Overall



Value 210.00 15,394.00



Value 0.09 0.66

Dashboard developed by South Carolina First Steps. Last updated October 19, 2022. Note: Kindergarten Readiness Assessment from 2020 was modified due to the COVID-19 pandemic and should not be compared to other years.

Tableau



Details

Dynamic Tableau Dashboards

At the Census Tract Level

SC B-5 Early Childhood Needs Assessment Data by [Chelsea Richard](#)



SC B-5 Early Childhood Needs Assessment

5

MAPS: Compare county distribution of two measures

BARS: Compare distribution of two measures

MAPS: Explore census tracts in a county or counties

MAP: Explore child care access in a county or counties

MAP & BARS: Kindergarten readiness by school

Select a Co... Richland

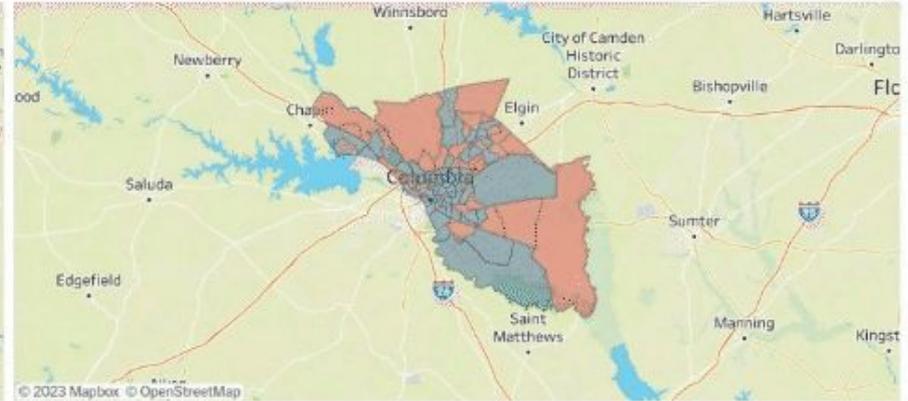
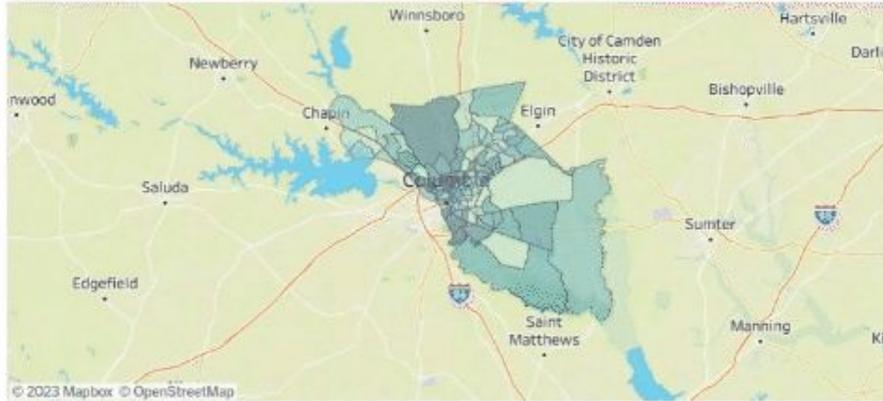
Population... 0.0%

100.0%

Child care ...

No

Yes



Provider location and center capacity obtained from [schoildcare.org](#) on October 16, 2022. Definition of a child care desert obtained from the Center for American Progress, "A child care desert is any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few providers that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots" (<https://www.childcaredeserts.org/>). Population under age 5 by census tract obtained from the American Community Survey.

326

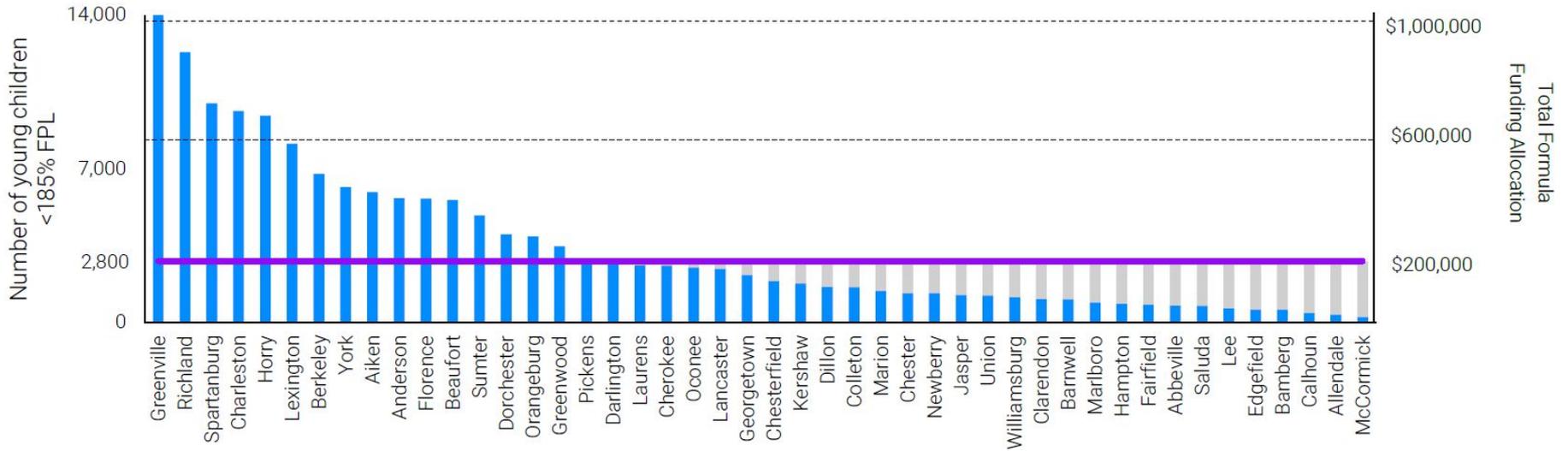


Strategic Planning → Taking Action



Allocating resources annually

A child-centered, data-driven funding model



Allocating resources annually

Responding to annual swings in population counts

Base Allocation

Every county receives a base allocation of \$200,000



Supplemental Allocation

Counties with 2,800+ young children living in poverty or low-income households



Year-to-Year Change 3% Cap

The maximum change in population count year-to-year capped at 3%.

Formula Funding is The Minimum Each County Can Receive

Additional funding available through targeted and competitive grants to county partnerships that meet or exceed performance standards

Overarching Measures of Success 1-3

1. INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES

By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase from 17% to 20%.

2. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HIGH INTENSITY PROGRAMS FUNDED BY FIRST STEPS

By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps high intensity programs will increase from 5% to 8%.

3. INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY FIRST STEPS

By 2025, the percentage of children under age 6 who benefit from First Steps quality enhancement and training efforts will increase from 12% to 15%.

Questions?



Connect with me!

crichard@scfirststeps.org

Twitter: @chelsealrichard