

EIA Program Report for Fiscal Year 2011-12

Coversheet

EIA-Funded Program Name: SC First Steps to School Readiness

Current Fiscal Year: 2011-12

Current EIA Appropriation: \$1,490,847

Name of Person Completing Survey and to whom EOC members may request additional information:

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Question 1: History of the program: Please mark the appropriate response (choose one):

This program:

- was an original initiative of the Education Improvement Act of 1984
- was created or implemented as part of the Education Accountability Act of 1998
- has been operational for less than five years
- was funded last fiscal year by general or other funds
- is a new program implemented for the first time in the current fiscal year
- Other (was funded in prior fiscal years by other state funds)

Question 2: What SC laws, including provisos in the current year's general appropriation act, govern the implementation of this program? Please complete citations from the SC Code of Laws including, Title, Chapter, and Section numbers.

Code of Laws:

Title 59, Chapter 152

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness

Proviso(s): (If applicable. Please make references to the 2011-12 General Appropriation Act as ratified. www.XXXXX)

N/A

Regulation(s):

N/A

Do guidelines that have been approved by the State Board of Education, the Commission on Higher Education or other governor board exist that govern the implementation of this program?

Yes

No

Question 3: What are the primary objective(s) or goals of this program? Please distinguish between the long-term mission of the program and the current annual objectives of the program. (The goals or objectives should be in terms that can be quantified, evaluated, and assessed.)

"The goals for South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness are to:
(1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children; (2) increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems; (3) promote high quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
(4) provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to learn; and (5) mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to learn."
[SECTION 59-152-30]

First Steps Partnership Boards in each county are charged with developing and/or expanding school readiness strategies based upon locally identified service gaps. Funding is allocated at the discretion of - and within the accountability confines established by - the First Steps State Board of Trustees (as supported by the Office of South Carolina First Steps). First Steps funds multiple school readiness strategies across five broad lines of work: health, parenting and family support, child care, early education, and school transition. Objectives are strategy specific and support the legislative mission of the initiative.

By Executive Order 2009-12, SC First Steps became the state's lead agency for IDEA Part C (the BabyNet early intervention program) on January 1, 2010. The First Steps Board of Trustees also serves as the state's designated Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) under the federal Head Start re-authorization of 2007.

Question 4: In the prior fiscal year, 2010-11, what primary program activities or processes were conducted to facilitate the program's performance in reaching the objective(s) as provided in Question 3? What, if any, change in processes or activities are planned for the current year?

Examples of program processes would be: training provided, recruiting efforts made, technical assistance services, monitoring services, etc.

Answers should be specific to the process undertaken at the state level to support the objectives of the program and should be quantifiable. Please include any professional development services provided.

IF the funds are allocated directly to school districts, please indicate any data collected at the state level to monitor how the funds are expended at the local level?

During the prior fiscal year, South Carolina First Steps funded a wide variety of school readiness strategies (via 46 non-profit County Partnerships), including pre-kindergarten, training, technical assistance and quality enhancement for child care providers, the provision of early education scholarships, parenting and family literacy services, Countdown to Kindergarten, health and nutrition strategies and others. Service to high-risk clients (determined using SC readiness data) is a priority under the First Steps Program Standards.

Question 5: In the prior fiscal year, 2010-11, and using the most recent data available, what were the direct products and services (outputs) delivered by this Program?

Examples of program outputs would be: number of teachers attending professional development seminars, number of and passage rates on AP exams, number of students served in the program, improvements in student achievement, retention and graduation.

With a wide range of services delivered via 46 First Steps partnerships, a comprehensive accounting of these outputs is prohibitive in this format.

Several key FY11 outputs include:

1,301 families served via the Parents as Teachers home visitation model received a total of 24,548 recorded home visits during FY10 (for a total of 27,687 hours of direct client service).

159 families served via the Parent-Child Home early literacy/home visitation model received a total of 6,295 recorded home visits during FY11 (for a total of 3,181 hours of direct client service).

114 SC childcare providers participating in First Steps intensive facility quality enhancement strategies (and enrolling at least 4,842 children aged 0-5) received a total of 2,329 recorded technical assistance visits from qualified personnel during FY11 (for a total of 5,015 hours of direct client service).

700 rising five-year-old kindergarten students participated in Countdown to Kindergarten - an eight week summer home visitation strategy linking high-risk students, their families and their future kindergarten teachers.

Question 6: What are the outcomes or results of this program?

Outcome can be both quantitative and qualitative and should address the program's objectives. Please use the most recent data available:

Examples of outcomes would be: results of surveys, student achievement results, increases in participation, reduction in achievement gaps, loans awarded, textbooks purchased, etc.

First Steps funding is outcomes-based, with each strategy requiring a Board-approved evaluation plan utilizing common statewide evaluation tools. The agency's most recent external evaluation - required by law on a triennial basis - was released in November 2010. The report's major findings were as follows:

1. "The impact of home visitation interventions to change parenting skills. Participants saw significant increases in their pre- and post-assessments. Overall, 54% of participants who scored low quality of parenting improved to a moderate quality of parenting. Forty four percent who scored moderate parenting skills moved to a high-quality of parenting, and 11.9% who had low quality parenting at pre-test increased their skills to high quality.

2. The impact of First Steps on child care quality through its child care quality enhancement strategy. Universally, child care centers and providers who participated showed significant increases in pre/post scores of assessed child care quality. Gains were seen for all scales on ECERS, ITERS and FDCERS as a result of quality enhancement strategies.

3. The impact of Countdown to Kindergarten. Through self-report data, all participants whether home visitor or parents report the significant impact this strategy has on professional practice, parent-teacher relationships, and parent participation in and child attitudes toward kindergarten.

4. The potential demonstrated in combined strategies. Except for one scale, child outcomes in FY 2006-07 indicated increased odds of scoring on a higher level on every SCRA scale when PAT is combined with 4K compared to full-day 4K only.

5. The potential demonstrated in the CDEPP initiative. With only one year of data, CDEPP children were not significantly different in the odds of scoring on a higher level on every SCRA scale compared to full-day 4K and non-4K children. They also had significantly lower speech impairment and learning disability diagnoses. This may demonstrate the potential for implementing public programs in private settings in a less expensive manner with similar results." (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2010, pp.148-149)

Question 7: Program Evaluations

What was the date of the last external or internal evaluation of this program?

2009/2010

Has an evaluation ever been conducted?

Yes

No

If an evaluation was conducted, what were the results and primary recommendations of the most recent evaluation?

By law, First Steps is evaluated by an external vendor every three years. The agency's most recent evaluation (2009/2010), conducted by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (under the supervision of a three-member evaluation panel appointed by the SC General Assembly and First Steps Board of Trustees), was released to the State Board in November 2010.

Major findings are quoted in the section above.

Can you provide a URL link, electronic version, or hard copy of this evaluation to the EOC?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide URL link here.

<http://www.scfirststeps.org/docs/2009Eval.pdf>

If no, why not?

Question 8:

While EIA revenues increased in 2010-11 over the prior fiscal year and no mid-year cuts were made to any EIA programs, programs and agencies continue to implement conservative budget practices.

Please describe how the program and/or organization would absorb or offset potential EIA reductions totaling 5%, and 10% in the current fiscal year, Fiscal Year 2011-12?

Like other agencies, First Steps' resources have decreased significantly over the past three years. We have attempted to mitigate these losses through the identification of administrative and staffing efficiencies as possible. While the agency would continue to seek methods through which to minimize losses in direct client service, additional cuts of this size would almost certainly result in service reductions (the exact nature of which would be determined at the local partnership level).

Question 9:

If no additional EIA revenues were appropriated to this program in Fiscal Year 2012-13 above the current year's appropriation level, how would the objectives, activities and priorities of this program change?

Please be specific to address the impact to students, teachers or schools. Are there regulatory or statutory changes that you would recommend to the legislature that would assist this program/organization in meeting its objectives?

Recognizing the challenges facing the state, First Steps is not requesting additional EIA funding at this time. While recent cuts have not fundamentally altered the agency's objectives and priorities, they have prevented First Steps from maintaining its previous levels of service to the state's children/families and intensified the agency's focus on high-risk clients.

If you want to provide supporting documents or evaluation reports, either reference a website below or email the report directly to

mbarton@eoc.sc.gov

Questions 10 and 11 Apply only to programs NOT administered by the South Carolina State Department of Education.

Question 10: Fiscal Year 2012-13

The total amount of EIA funds requested for this program for the next fiscal year will be:

The same as appropriated in the current fiscal year's appropriation

An increase over the current fiscal year's appropriation

A decrease over the current fiscal year's appropriation

If you indicated an increase or decrease in funding for the next fiscal year, what is the total amount requested for this program for the next fiscal year?

\$1,490,847

If you indicated an increase or decrease, please describe the reasons for the increase or decrease. How will the increase or decrease impact the objective of the program?

Question 11: Fiscal Years 2010-11 and 2011-12

Please fill in the attached charts to reflect the budget for this program in the prior fiscal year (2010-11) and the budget for this program in the current fiscal year (2011-12).

If the program was not funded in the prior fiscal year, please fill out information for the current fiscal year only.

Funding Source	Prior FY Actual	Current FY Estimated
EIA	1,490,847	1,490,847
General Fund	11,971,944	11,971,944
F		
Fees		
Other Sources		
Grant		
Contributions, Foundation		
Other (Specify)	202,810	202,810
Carry Forward from Prior Yr	681,412	* 1,489,793
TOTAL	14,346,713	15,155,394

Other:

- 1) *Fringe Benefits (employer contributions) = \$202,810*
- 2) *Current FY estimate does not include grants and other funds. Grants and other funds do not augment EIA funds.*
- 3) *Current FY carryforward of \$1,489,793 includes *\$390,400 state dollars related to the I.D.E.A. Part C BabyNet program*

Expenditures	Prior FY Actual	Current FY
Personal Service	455,259	557,037
Contractual Services	833,839	892,970
Supplies and Materials	10,297	12,100
Fixed Charges	52,630	101,752
Travel	8,409	12,100
Equipment		
Employer Contributions	127,763	202,810
Allocations to Districts/Schools/Agencies/Entities	11,368,723	13,376,725
Other: Please explain		
Balance Remaining	1,489,793	
TOTAL	14,346,713	15,155,394
#FTEs	16	16

Other: N/A