

Agency Name:	First Steps		
Agency Code:	H620	Section:	1

Fiscal Year FY 2025-2026

Agency Budget Plan

FORM A - BUDGET PLAN SUMMARY

OPERATING REQUESTS (FORM B1)	For FY 2025-2026, my agency is (mark "X"):	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Requesting General Fund Appropriations.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Requesting Federal/Other Authorization.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not requesting any changes.
NON-RECURRING REQUESTS (FORM B2)	For FY 2025-2026, my agency is (mark "X"):	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Requesting Non-Recurring Appropriations.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Requesting Non-Recurring Federal/Other Authorization.
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not requesting any changes.
CAPITAL REQUESTS (FORM C)	For FY 2025-2026, my agency is (mark "X"):	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Requesting funding for Capital Projects.
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not requesting any changes.
PROVISOS (FORM D)	For FY 2025-2026, my agency is (mark "X"):	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Requesting a new proviso and/or substantive changes to existing provisos.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Only requesting technical proviso changes (such as date references).
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not requesting any proviso changes.

Please identify your agency’s preferred contacts for this year’s budget process.

PRIMARY CONTACT: SECONDARY CONTACT:	<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
	Mark Barnes	(803) 734-8079	MBarnes@scfirststeps.org
	David O'Kelly	(803) 734-2176	DOKelly@scfirststeps.org

I have reviewed and approved the enclosed FY 2025-2026 Agency Budget Plan, which is complete and accurate to the extent of my knowledge.

SIGN/DATE: TYPE/PRINT NAME:	<u>Agency Director</u>	<u>Board or Commission Chair</u>
	DocuSigned by: Mark Barnes 41CC97C96BEF4E9...	Signed by: David Morley 2360A91000001...
	Mark Barnes	David Morley

This form must be signed by the agency head – not a delegate.

Agency Name:	First Steps
Agency Code:	H620
Section:	1

<u>BUDGET REQUESTS</u>			<u>FUNDING</u>					<u>FTES</u>				
Priority	Request Type	Request Title	State	Federal	Earmarked	Restricted	Total	State	Federal	Earmarked	Restricted	Total
1	B1 - Recurring	Unfunded Personnel Cost Increases (EIA)	192,108	0	0	0	192,108	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	B1 - Recurring	Recruitment and Retention Costs	264,401	0	0	0	264,401	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3	B1 - Recurring	SC First Steps Local Partnerships	3,531,500	0	0	0	3,531,500	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4	B1 - Recurring	Early Childhood Advisory Council	87,189	0	0	0	87,189	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
5	B1 - Recurring	Full-Day 4K	5,783,835	0	0	0	5,783,835	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00
6	B1 - Recurring	Budget Authorization Request	0	2,911,212	10,800,528	0	13,711,740	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTALS			9,859,033	2,911,212	10,800,528	0	23,570,773	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00

Agency Name:	First Steps		
Agency Code:	H620	Section:	1

FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY	1
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Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE	Unfunded Personnel Cost Increases (EIA)
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Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT	<p>General: \$192,108</p> <p>Federal: \$0</p> <p>Other: \$0</p> <p>Total: \$192,108</p>
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What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2025-2026? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS	0.00
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Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST	Mark “X” for all that apply:	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program
	<input type="checkbox"/>	IT Technology/Security related
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HR/Personnel Related
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted DTO during development	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #	

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	Mark “X” for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Education, Training, and Human Development
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Healthy and Safe Families
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government and Citizens

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS	<p>These funds would support all agency strategies. The increase in personnel and fringe costs affected all parts of our agency.</p>
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What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency’s accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

RECIPIENTS OF	SC First Steps
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FUNDS

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF
REQUEST

A majority of SC First Steps personnel costs are funded from Education Improvement Act Funds. SC First Steps did not receive incremental funds associated with the FY 2024-25 state-approved cost increases in health insurance and mandated across-the-board increases. Without these funds we will not have enough personnel funds in our personnel accounts. The result is that previously funded positions have become unfunded. We are requesting recurring EIA funds to cover these costs. These include **\$90,877** in Personnel, **\$38,168** in fringe and **\$63,063** in health insurance. The total amount is **\$192,108**. There are no salary increases or changes in salaries associated with this request.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	First Steps		
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FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY

2

Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE

Recruitment and Retention Costs

Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT

General: \$264,401

Federal: \$0

Other: \$0

Total: \$264,401

What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2025-2026? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS

0.00

Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST

Mark "X" for all that apply:

X

Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience

X

Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines

Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program

Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas

Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative

Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program

Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program

IT Technology/Security related

X

HR/Personnel Related

Consulted DTO during development

Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Mark "X" for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:

X

Education, Training, and Human Development

Healthy and Safe Families

Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security

Public Infrastructure and Economic Development

Government and Citizens

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS

These funds would support all agency strategies. The increases in personnel and fringe costs will affect all parts of the agency.

What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency's accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

SC First Steps

RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST

First Steps management team worked with the state's Office of Human Resources to analyze all positions in the agency during 2023. The agency has never received a recruitment and retention budget increase from the General Assembly. The analysis conducted by OHR reviewed every position and employee to ensure that they are classified and paid properly based on each job function and role. This request is the result of that work and includes the recommendations of staff from the Office of Human Resources. The evaluation compared our employees salaries to other state employees salaries in like roles and functions in early 2023. This request includes additional funds to cover needed reclassifications and salary adjustments for current employees based on the study. In addition, since that time, in order to recruit new staff, we have had to increase starting pay for 5 positions, and had to increase current salaries for an additional 10 positions to retain staff. The increase in starting pay was for positions that had shown a history of not being able to fill at the previous salary levels. All increases have been approved by OHR or are in the process of getting approved. The personnel cost for the Classification and Compensation study and the recruitment and retention increases comes to a total personnel cost of **\$211,521**, with **\$52,880** for fringe for a total cost **\$264,401**. There would be no operating cost for this request which makes the total cost of this request **\$264,401**.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

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FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY	3
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Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE	SC First Steps Local Partnerships
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Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT	<p>General: \$3,531,500</p> <p>Federal: \$0</p> <p>Other: \$0</p> <p>Total: \$3,531,500</p>
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What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2025-2026? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS	0.00
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Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST	<p>Mark “X” for all that apply:</p> <table> <tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience</td></tr> <tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative</td></tr> <tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>IT Technology/Security related</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>HR/Personnel Related</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Consulted DTO during development</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #</td></tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program	<input type="checkbox"/>	IT Technology/Security related	<input type="checkbox"/>	HR/Personnel Related	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted DTO during development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #
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STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	<p>Mark “X” for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:</p> <table> <tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>Education, Training, and Human Development</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Healthy and Safe Families</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Public Infrastructure and Economic Development</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Government and Citizens</td></tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Education, Training, and Human Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Healthy and Safe Families	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government and Citizens
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security										
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development										
<input type="checkbox"/>	Government and Citizens										

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS	<p>These funds would go to meeting the following strategic priorities from our strategic plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure Children Are Ready for Kindergarten 2. Close Gaps Through Equity: A Fair Chance for Every Child 3. Increase Funding for First Steps Investments in Early Childhood 4. Create a coordinated and Family-Centered Early Childhood System <p>Funds would be used to provide funding for additional costs for supporting the local partnerships as well as READY Grants to the local partnerships to prevent the reduction of services due to a loss of federal and other funding.</p>
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What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency’s accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS

The Local Partnerships would receive the majority of the funds through grants to offset the loss of federal funds which will reduce services to children. Some of the funds would be used to incentivize the regionalization of local partnerships. These incentives would be provided based on a plan to regionalize which would be approved by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees. The cost of direct support to the local partnerships has increased and some of these funds would be used to cover those additional costs as well as providing support to the local partnerships for public private partnerships in underserved areas.

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST

Prior to the pandemic, First Steps local partnerships were serving, on average, about 30,000 children directly each year. This number has increased each year to 60,727 in 2023-24. This more than doubled the amount previously provided and was an increase of 102%. Even though this was a significant increase in services, it is still well below the level needed to serve the number of children in need. To be responsive to this increased demand, First Steps obtained short-term, time limited philanthropic and government funding. With these funding streams ending around the same time, during the 2024-25 fiscal year, it is our duty to ensure that we meet the increased demand for First Steps services. In order to meet the demand and maintain this level of services, we are requesting the following:

Direct Support to the Local Partnerships: In the last year there have been significant increases in costs for direct support, these include increases for (a.) Annual financial audits of **\$75,000**, (b.) Cost of integrating a Payroll and Grants system into the existing financial management system of **\$56,500**, (c.) Increased cost for additional payroll and benefits administration of **\$150,000** for a total increase of **\$281,500**.

Increases in services provided through READY Grants: \$2,500,000 in both evidence based parenting and home visitation programs to replace time limited private and federal grants. These funds are needed to maintain the current level of services. **\$500,000** in transition programs such as Countdown to Kindergarten and Countdown to 4K programs. Without adequate funding, we will not be able to sustain our gains and over 3,000 children will not be able to receive these services. In addition, additional grant funds to support public private partnerships to increase child care capacity in underserved areas of **\$250,000** would have an impact on projects in conjunction with other state and local entities. The total of the **READY Grant Request** would be **\$3,250,000**.

The total amount of funding for the local partnerships is **\$3,531,500**.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	First Steps		
Agency Code:	H620	Section:	1

FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY	4
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Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE	Early Childhood Advisory Council
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Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT	<p>General: \$87,189</p> <p>Federal: \$0</p> <p>Other: \$0</p> <p>Total: \$87,189</p>
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What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2025-2026? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS	1.00
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Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST	<p>Mark “X” for all that apply:</p> <table> <tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative</td></tr> <tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>IT Technology/Security related</td></tr> <tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>HR/Personnel Related</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Consulted DTO during development</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #</td></tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program	<input type="checkbox"/>	IT Technology/Security related	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HR/Personnel Related	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted DTO during development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience																						
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STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	<p>Mark “X” for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:</p> <table> <tr><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td>Education, Training, and Human Development</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Healthy and Safe Families</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Public Infrastructure and Economic Development</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Government and Citizens</td></tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Education, Training, and Human Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Healthy and Safe Families	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government and Citizens
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development										
<input type="checkbox"/>	Government and Citizens										

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS	All strategies. Funds would be used to meet statutory requirements for the Early Childhood Advisory Council which has initiated a number of ground breaking efforts to support the early childhood system in the state.
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What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency’s accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

	SC First Steps, the agency responsible for supporting the ECAC.
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RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST

South Carolina's Early Childhood Advisory Council is the statutorily authorized structure for coordinating all of South Carolina's public investments in early childhood services, ensuring effective and efficient use of state and federal funds, and building a cohesive system that ensures young children are healthy and safe, ready for school and actively supported by their families and communities. The ECAC has established ground-breaking joint efforts to develop the early childhood system in SC. These include creating joint agency web-based eligibility and application portals, integrated data sharing and visualization initiatives, interagency collaboration, statewide early childhood needs assessments including parent surveying and focus groups, a unified early childhood state plan, two-generation initiatives focused on education and economic stability and a family voice council. Due to the great success of these initiatives, and the increase in support needed to continue and build these public facing models, we need one additional staff member. The position is critical for additional needed support for coordinating all partners use and referrals of the public portals, provide data governance for the multiple systems. The position is an AM62 IT Customer Support Specialist III. The personnel cost would be **\$55,559**, with fringe of **\$23,335**, and the total personnel cost is **\$78,894**. The operating cost would include Travel, for one person driving an average of 500 miles per month, for \$4,020, lease space cost of 90 sq ft at \$17.50 per foot for \$1,575, necessary training for \$1,500, and \$1,200 in supplies. Total operating of **\$8,295** and the total cost of this request is **\$87,189**.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

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FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY	5
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Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE	Full-Day 4K
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Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT	<p>General: \$5,783,835</p> <p>Federal: \$0</p> <p>Other: \$0</p> <p>Total: \$5,783,835</p>
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What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2025-2026? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS	4.00
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Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST	<p>Mark “X” for all that apply:</p> <table> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>IT Technology/Security related</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>HR/Personnel Related</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Consulted DTO during development</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #</td> </tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program	<input type="checkbox"/>	IT Technology/Security related	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HR/Personnel Related	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted DTO during development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program																						
<input type="checkbox"/>	IT Technology/Security related																						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HR/Personnel Related																						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted DTO during development																						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #																						

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	<p>Mark “X” for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:</p> <table> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Education, Training, and Human Development</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Healthy and Safe Families</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Public Infrastructure and Economic Development</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Government and Citizens</td> </tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Education, Training, and Human Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Healthy and Safe Families	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government and Citizens
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Education, Training, and Human Development										
<input type="checkbox"/>	Healthy and Safe Families										
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security										
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development										
<input type="checkbox"/>	Government and Citizens										

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS	<p>These services fulfill the agency's major strategic goals of Ensuring Children are Ready for Kindergarten, Close Gaps through Equity: A Fair Chance for Every Child, and Increase Funding for First Steps' Investment in Early Childhood. These funds would be used to operate the program and to pay tuition costs for the children to be served.</p> <p>These services are evaluated annually by multiple assessments including pre and post services, as well as the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, annual Education Oversight Committee evaluations, internal evaluations, as well as our 4K coaches.</p>
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What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency’s accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

	SC First Steps would receive \$469,576 of additional funds to cover the increased
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<p>RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS</p>	<p>costs of operating the program and \$5,314,259 would be used to fund full day 4K for 4 year old children in 4K classrooms for a total of \$5,783,835.</p>
<p><i>What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?</i></p>	
<p>JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST</p>	<p>The 4K Program has continued to grow each year. Starting with the 2024-25 year, the number of children enrolled in the first month has again increased more than 12% over the same month last year. The program has enrolled over 3,850 students for the current year. We expect the program to add at least another 7% for the 2025-26 fiscal year which would total an additional 270 students. In order to fund this increase, we are requesting the following items which are needed for the 2025-26 school year.</p> <p>1. Funding to cover the expected 7% increase in students for 25-26: \$1,953,220</p> <p>2. Funding to cover a \$200 increase per student in tuition rate: \$823,900</p> <p>3. Using the projected growth for this year and assuming the program continues to grow for the next year, we will need at least three additional FTE's to provide oversight, training, support and accountability for the additional classrooms for FY 2025-26. These positions will be critical to ensuring quality in the classrooms. Three of the positions would be CB05 Education Associates which are band 7. In addition, due to the continued growth of the program an AH15 Administrative Coordinator II is needed to handle administrative responsibilities such as planning, coordinating, ordering, and maintaining inventories of materials and supplies in the more than 350 classrooms. This would be a band 6 position. The personnel cost for these positions of three at \$80,105 each and one at \$66,488 for a total of \$306,803, with fringe of \$128,857, and total personnel cost \$435,660. The operating cost would include Travel, for three staff of an average of 834 miles per month, for \$20,116, necessary training for each of \$1,500 for a total of \$4,500, required annual conferences of \$4,500, and \$1,200 in supplies for each of the four at \$4,800. Total operating would be \$33,916 and the total cost of this request would be \$469,576.</p> <p>4. Funding to cover an additional 341 students based on the requested eligibility change to 300% of the federal poverty guidelines: \$2,537,139</p> <p>The total funding needed, assuming the state increases the eligibility to 300% of the federal poverty guidelines, is \$5,783,835.</p> <p>If the state does not increase the eligibility to 300% of the federal poverty guidelines, the total requested is \$3,246,696</p>
<p><i>Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.</i></p>	

Agency Name:	First Steps		
Agency Code:	H620	Section:	1

FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY

6

Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE

Budget Authorization Request

Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT

General: \$0

Federal: \$2,911,212

Other: \$10,800,528

Total: \$13,711,740

What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2025-2026? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS

0.00

Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST

Mark "X" for all that apply:

X

Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience

X

Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines

Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program

Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas

X

Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative

Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program

X

Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program

IT Technology/Security related

HR/Personnel Related

Consulted DTO during development

Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Mark "X" for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:

X

Education, Training, and Human Development

Healthy and Safe Families

Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security

Public Infrastructure and Economic Development

Government and Citizens

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS

This request covers all of the strategic goals and objectives in our strategic plan and accountability report.

What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency's accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

These funds would come to SC First Steps from various federal and private grants,

RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS

donated funds, and other fund sources, including existing cash balances and fundraising. The majority of these funds, would be distributed to our Local Partnerships and 4K providers for direct services to children and families throughout the state.

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST

SC First Steps has received a number of private and federal grants and contracts that will be in place for the 2025-26 fiscal year. In addition, we have cash balances and are active in fundraising and these funds will need to be used to pay for services for the fiscal year. The total amount of authorization requested is broken out below.

	Federal	Earmarked	Total
Total	2,911,212	10,800,528	13,711,740
Classified	855,473	330,215	1,185,688
Employer Contributions	260,567	137,941	398,508
Other Operating	1,795,172	10,332,372	12,127,544

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	First Steps		
Agency Code:	H620	Section:	1

FORM D – PROVISO REVISION REQUEST

NUMBER	1.103
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Cite the proviso according to the renumbered list (or mark "NEW").

TITLE	SDE: First Steps Division
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Provide the title from the renumbered list or suggest a short title for any new request.

BUDGET PROGRAM	VIII, Education Improvement Act, I First Steps to School Readiness, XIII First Steps to School Readiness
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Identify the associated budget program(s) by name and budget section.

RELATED BUDGET REQUEST	N/A
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Is this request associated with a budget request you have submitted for FY 2025-2026? If so, cite it here.

REQUESTED ACTION	Delete
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Choose from: Add, Delete, Amend, or Codify.

OTHER AGENCIES AFFECTED	State Department of Education
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Which other agencies would be affected by the recommended action? How?

SUMMARY & EXPLANATION	Proviso separates SC First Steps from the State Department of Education effective July 1, 2024. The action has been taken so the proviso can be deleted.
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Summarize the existing proviso. If requesting a new proviso, describe the current state of affairs without it. Explain the need for your requested action. For deletion requests due to recent codification, please identify SC Code section where language now appears.

FISCAL IMPACT

The action has already been completed so should have no impact.

Provide estimates of any fiscal impacts associated with this proviso, whether for state, federal, or other funds. Explain the method of calculation.

PROPOSED PROVISO TEXT

~~**1.103.** (SDE: First Steps Division) Effective July 1, 2024, the Office of First Steps is authorized to operate independently from the Department of Education. The Office of First Steps shall work with the Department of Administration, Executive Budget Office, in consultation with the Department of Education, to separate out funding sources, employees, proviso language, and anything else pertinent to formally separate First Steps from the Department of Education.~~

Paste existing text above, then bold and underline insertions and strikethrough deletions. For new proviso requests, enter requested text above.

Agency Name:	First Steps		
Agency Code:	H620	Section:	1

FORM D – PROVISO REVISION REQUEST

NUMBER	1.47,1A.26
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Cite the proviso according to the renumbered list (or mark "NEW").

TITLE	SDE: Full-Day 4K
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Provide the title from the renumbered list or suggest a short title for any new request.

BUDGET PROGRAM	VIII, Education Improvement Act, I First Steps to School Readiness, XIII First Steps to School Readiness
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Identify the associated budget program(s) by name and budget section.

RELATED BUDGET REQUEST	Full Day 4K
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Is this request associated with a budget request you have submitted for FY 2025-2026? If so, cite it here.

REQUESTED ACTION	Amend
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Choose from: Add, Delete, Amend, or Codify.

OTHER AGENCIES AFFECTED	State Department of Education
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Which other agencies would be affected by the recommended action? How?

SUMMARY & EXPLANATION	Proviso specifies the requirements and limitations on the expenditure of funds for the Full-Day 4K Program (CERDEP). Requested change reinforces and documents the understanding that both the State Department of Education and SC First Steps will collect and share any waiting lists for the 4K program at the school and child care center level by September 1 of the fiscal year.
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Summarize the existing proviso. If requesting a new proviso, describe the current state of affairs without it. Explain the need for your requested action. For deletion requests due to recent codification, please identify SC Code section where language now appears.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact should be minimal as this is already an expected process.

Provide estimates of any fiscal impacts associated with this proviso, whether for state, federal, or other funds. Explain the method of calculation.

1.47. (SDE: Full-Day 4K) (A) Eligible students residing in any school district or attending any charter school authorized by the South Carolina Public Charter School District or an approved institution of higher education may participate in the South Carolina Early Reading Development and Education program (CERDEP) pending the availability of space and funding. Student eligibility as defined by Section 59-156-130 of the 1976 Code is an annual family income of one hundred eighty-five percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or a statement of Medicaid eligibility.

(B) A parent or guardian may choose to enroll their child in a public school participating in the program and approved by the Department of Education pursuant to Section 59-156-210 or in a private provider participating in the program and approved by the Office of First Steps pursuant to Section 59-156-200. A private provider includes, but is not limited to, a child care center, a military child care facility regulated by the United States Department of Defense, or a non-profit independent school. State funds appropriated for the provision of CERDEP services in military child care facilities may not be used to supplant existing federal child care funds. No school district can be denied participation in CERDEP or be denied CERDEP funding pursuant to the terms of this provision.

(C) 4K programs in public schools and non-profit independent schools participating in CERDEP are not required to be approved, registered, or licensed by the Department of Social Services in order to participate in CERDEP. Instead, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps are responsible for ensuring that providers deliver high-quality educational programs pursuant to Section 59-156-160.

(D) Public and private providers shall be funded for instructional costs at a minimum rate of \$5,100 per student enrolled. Eligible students enrolling during the school year or withdrawing during the school year shall be funded on a pro rata basis determined by the length of their enrollment. Private providers transporting eligible children to and from school shall also be eligible for reimbursement at a minimum of \$620 per eligible child transported. First Steps and the Department of Education must provide an equitable distribution above the minimum between public and private providers. First Steps and the Department of Education must provide a quarterly report beginning October 1 detailing funding above the minimum made to any provider to the Governor, the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. All providers who are reimbursed are required to retain records as required by their fiscal agent. New providers participating for the first time in the current fiscal year and enrolling between one and six eligible children shall be eligible to receive at a minimum of \$1,000 per child in materials and equipment funding, with providers enrolling seven or more such children eligible for funding at a minimum of \$10,000. The Department of Education and the Office of First Steps Readiness are authorized to utilize carry forward funds and federal funds to supplement the amount expended for materials and equipment. Providers receiving equipment funding are expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs as defined herein

**PROPOSED
PROVISO TEXT**

for a minimum of three years. Failure to participate for three years will require the provider to return a portion of the equipment allocation at a level determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. Funding to providers is contingent upon receipt of data as requested by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps. The Department of Education shall only provide funding for public school students whose complete records have been entered into PowerSchool based on the one hundred and thirty-five day student average daily membership. For the current fiscal year, providers may enroll pay-lunch children who score at or below the twenty-fifth national percentile on two of the three DIAL-3 subscales by July 1 if at least seventy-five percent of the total number of children eligible or the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program in a district or county are projected to be enrolled in that program, Head Start, or ABC Child Care Program as determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps, Child Early Reading Development and Education Program. Providers may receive reimbursement for these children if funds are available. **By September 1, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps must collect the documented waiting lists, share the lists, and determine a process to notify parents of eligible students of available slots in all approved providers.** The Department of Education is required to offer waivers allowing students with disabilities to be served in multi-categorical classroom settings based on similar cognition and abilities. Funding appropriated for CERDEP may be carried forward and expended for the same purpose.

(E) Annually, the Department of Education is directed to audit the annual allocations to public providers to ensure that allocations are accurate and aligned to the appropriate pro rata per student allocation, materials, and equipment funding. In the event the department, during the audit process determines that the annual allocations of the prior fiscal year are not accurate, the department must adjust the allocations for the current fiscal year to account for the audit findings. The department must provide the results of the annual audit findings to the General Assembly no later than December first. Likewise, in the event the Office of First Steps determines that the annual allocations of the prior fiscal year to private providers are not accurate, the Office of First Steps must adjust the allocations for the current fiscal year to account for the findings.

(F) Of the funds appropriated, \$300,000 shall be allocated to the Education Oversight Committee to conduct an annual evaluation of the South Carolina Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) and to issue findings in a report to the General Assembly by March first of each year. To aid in this evaluation, the Education Oversight Committee shall determine and obtain the data necessary and both public and private providers are required to submit the necessary data as a condition of continued participation in and funding of the program, including average daily attendance data, so that consistent enrollment may be determined. This data shall include developmentally appropriate measures of student progress. Additionally, the Department of Education shall issue a unique student identifier for each child receiving services from a public or private provider including those funded by CERDEP, Head Start, SC Child Care Scholarships, EIA, Title I, district-funded, and all other federal, state, or local public sources. The Department of Education shall be responsible for the collection and maintenance of data on the public state funded full day and half-day four-year-old kindergarten programs. The Office of First Steps to School Readiness shall be responsible for the collection and maintenance of data on the state funded programs provided through private providers. The Education Oversight Committee shall use this data and all other collected and maintained data necessary to conduct a research based review of the program's implementation and assessment of student success in the early elementary grades along with information, recommendations, and a timeline for how the state can increase the number of students served in high-quality programs. To aid in the accurate reporting of four-year-olds in poverty served in formal education programs in public schools in South Carolina, the Department of Education must provide to the EOC data related to four-year-olds served in formal education programs funded with other state, local, or federal funds, including Title 1 and EIA-District-funded programs, denoting full- or partial-day status.

(G) For eligible children residing in school districts that do not participate in CERDEP, the Department of Education is required to develop and implement inter-district transfer policies that give parents or guardians the option of their eligible child attending an out-of-district school that participates in CERDEP.

(H) For the current fiscal year, the Office of First Steps may expend: (1) up to \$2,000,000 to pilot a program to provide higher reimbursement rates to high-quality providers. The reimbursement rate for students enrolled by child care providers rated B or higher in the ABC Quality System operated by the Department of Social Services may be increased by up to 10% of the per-student base following guidelines developed by the Office of First Steps; and (2) up to \$250,000 to provide one-time supplemental, needs-based incentive grants in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for newly created and/or newly approved private providers proposing to expand service to ten or more CERDEP eligible children in communities unable to enroll all eligible students in a public, private, or Head Start setting during the prior fiscal year. These grants are designed to address building renovations, documented as necessary to bring proposed classrooms into compliance with licensing

regulations, materials and staffing costs, and/or other obstacles currently preventing their participation in the program. The First Steps Board of Trustees shall develop and approve an application process that incorporates formal review and fiscal safeguards designed to ensure grant funds are used solely to address documented barriers to program participation. Providers receiving this one-time supplement shall be expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs as defined herein for a minimum of three years. Failure to participate for three years shall require the provider to return a portion of the supplemental allocation at a level determined by the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. First Steps shall submit a report detailing its process, expenditures and expanded enrollment to the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee by March 15.

(I) If by August first, the Department of Education or the Office of First Steps determines that appropriations will exceed expenditures, available funds may be used to fund an extended program and to increase the length of the program to a maximum of eight and a half hours per day or two hundred and twenty days per year or to fund summer programs. If a district chooses to fund summer enrollment, the program funding shall conform to the funding in this act for full year programs; however, it shall be reduced on a pro rata basis to conform with the length of the program. A summer program shall be no more than eight and a half hours per day and shall be not more than ten weeks in length. The per pupil allocation and classroom grant must conform with the appropriated amount contained in this act and end of year adjustments shall be based on the one hundred and thirty-five-day student average daily membership or later student average daily membership for districts choosing to extend the program past one hundred and eighty days. Funds may also be used to provide parent engagement, professional development, and quality evaluations of programs. No later than April first, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps shall report to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee on the expenditure of these funds to include the following information: the amount of money used and specific steps and measures taken to enhance the quality of the 4K program and the amount of money used for professional development as well as the types of professional development offered and the number of participants. The Office of First Steps is directed to determine if the provision of extended programs in private centers improves the ability of parents to enter the workforce or to pursue postsecondary training or industry credentials.

(J) On or before November 15, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps shall share data that identifies the total number of children enrolled in CERDEP in both public and private providers. If available appropriations exceed the instructional costs of serving children enrolled in the program and if a waiting list of eligible children can be documented by the Department of Education and by the Office of First Steps, then the Executive Budget Office may authorize the transfer of funds between the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps. (K) The Office of First Steps and the Department of Education shall collaborate with the South Carolina Head Start State Collaboration Office to inform parents of all publicly funded full-day 4K programs including Head Start by participating in PalmettoPreK and First5SC.

Paste existing text above, then bold and underline insertions and strikethrough deletions. For new proviso requests, enter requested text above.

Agency Name:	First Steps		
Agency Code:	H620	Section:	1

FORM E – AGENCY COST SAVINGS AND GENERAL FUND REDUCTION CONTINGENCY PLAN

TITLE	SC First Steps
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AMOUNT	\$576,850
	<i>What is the General Fund 3% reduction amount? This amount should correspond to the reduction spreadsheet prepared by EBO.</i>

ASSOCIATED FTE REDUCTIONS	No FTE's would be reduced. Any general fund reductions for staffing would be covered by other sources of funds.
	<i>How many FTEs would be reduced in association with this General Fund reduction?</i>

PROGRAM / ACTIVITY IMPACT	<p>The cuts would include the following reductions:</p> <p>Personnel \$38,828 with associated fringe of \$6,854. These cuts would be offset from other funds. Operating funds would be reduced by \$67,601, which would reduce the support for the ECAC and Local Partnerships and would result in reductions of the development and promotion</p> <p>of the portals for parents trying to get access to services for their children and reduce support for the local partnerships. The CDEPP</p> <p>(4K) Program would be reduced by \$373,566 which could result in a reductions of as many as 51 low income children in the program. The remaining amount, \$90,000 would be reduced from the READY Grants to the Local Partnerships, which could result in the reduction of as many as 900 children from various services being provided to low income children.</p> <p>Total reduction in Funding of \$576,850.</p> <p><i>What programs or activities are supported by the General Funds identified?</i></p>
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SUMMARY	<p>3% of the recurring General Funds would be \$19,228,324 X .3 = \$576,850 and would be broken down as follows. The Classified personnel are staff members at SC First Steps in various programs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classified \$38,828 2. Fringe \$6,854 3. CDEPP (4K) \$373,566 Full day 4 year old kindergarten in private providers throughout the state. 4. READY Local Partnership Grants \$90,000 Grants provided to Local Partnerships for direct evidence based services along with capacity and infrastructure. <p>Total Funding Reduction: \$576,850</p>
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