

First 5 Alameda County Strategic Plan 2022–2027



Acknowledgements

First 5 wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the many people who made this plan possible. This plan was developed in a challenging time two years into the pandemic, when families, communities, organizations, and public systems are stretched beyond limit. Our deepest respect and gratitude to our community for their fortitude, and appreciation to those who were able to take time to think about how to best use First 5's public resources and to envision an early childhood system where children and families can thrive. Special thanks to:

- Parents and caregivers for their wisdom and experiences
- Early childhood providers and community serving organizations for “on the ground” insight
- Community leaders for the clear-eyed systems perspective
- First 5 staff for thoughtful participation, dialogue, and decision-making
- Our consultant Hickman Strategies for their role in our strategic planning process
- First 5 Alameda County Commissioners for their guidance and support



Our work is a continuation of the legacy of Alameda County Supervisor and First 5 founding Commissioner Wilma Chan.

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A MOMENT OF URGENCY AND POSSIBILITY

Ensuring Alameda County's children grow into healthy, productive adults is fundamental to our community's prosperity, health, and well-being. Decades of research have demonstrated that the period from birth to age five is the most critical window of opportunity to have a positive impact on a child's future. The correlation between early childhood development, community and family conditions, and lifelong health has also been established, and they are undeniably intertwined.

The research makes clear that disparate life outcomes of children, related to health, education, and employment, are the result of historic and ongoing racist, classist policies that extract resources (i.e., poorly paid labor) and do harm to some communities, families, and children, while benefiting others. Despite these forces, there are systemic interventions that can positively change the lives of children and their families. These findings have profound implications for public policy and the role of public systems.

It is evident that President Biden's proposals in support of families with young children and Governor Newsom's investments in early childhood are informed by the growing recognition of both the conditions necessary to support family and child well-being and the need for public policy to address the increasing inequality. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has destabilized the private and public sector, has also exponentially increased community and family needs, and further highlighted government's unique and necessary role in meeting the moment in hopes of a better future.

This is a moment to invest in a better future through long-term, systemic solutions for children and families.





WHO WE ARE

First 5 was established in 1998 by California’s Proposition 10.

Our role is to improve life outcomes for Alameda County’s youngest children. We support, inform, and partner with public systems (i.e., health, early care and education, economic, and family supports) and community resources to create an early childhood system of care that is responsive to the needs of caregivers and families with young children.

We are guided by a “whole community, whole family, whole child” policy and programming approach to our work. First 5 uses lessons learned from our investments, research and data, and partnerships to inform policy positions and influence local, state, and national decision-making.

We recognize that the context of lived experience is essential to impactful investment, program design, and policy advocacy, and we support the efforts of families, caregivers, and community-based organizations to that end. We have a multi-year investment in place-based initiatives, and we have funded community engagement work, including summer pre-kindergarten programs, alongside Alameda County’s school districts. We have partnered with community providers and pediatricians to support families’ concerns about their child’s development and access to resources. We provide technical assistance and infrastructure support to the early childhood education field and community-based providers. We invest in father-friendly programming and systems so men and dads are not excluded from conversations affecting their children.

“First 5 policy efforts focus on systems change, particularly across sectors, with an intention to shift the conditions that hold problems in place, in order to achieve meaningful and lasting social change.”

-First 5 Association 2022-24 Strategic Plan

Our “North Star,” the population result that guides our work, is that all **Children Are Ready for Kindergarten;** our work is to ensure that policies, systems, communities, and schools support families and children by creating the **conditions** that position all for success.

We routinely assess and evaluate our efforts to identify areas for improvement, capacity building, and where there are gaps in the early childhood system, we strive to fund and scale promising programs and proven interventions. Where possible we integrate and align our activities to improve equitable access to better serve the needs of Alameda County families.

Since 2008, First 5 has benchmarked results for our county’s children by conducting a biannual Kindergarten Readiness study. Results have shown very little improvement over time and consistently point to the countervailing impact of socioeconomic, community conditions, and limited enrollment in early education as barriers to kindergarten readiness.¹

Since 1998, First 5 Alameda County has:

- **Raised \$39 million from philanthropic and other funding sources**
- **Earned \$18 million from federal fiscal leveraging**
- **Awarded \$246 million to community partners and agencies**

In light of this data, First 5 is partnering with the community to expand our analysis of root causes of low kindergarten readiness by assessing the resource level of targeted neighborhoods, schools, and systems. In fiscal year 2020–2021, we used our data to inform community investment strategies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a data-informed equity framework, we invested in school districts to support kindergarten transitions, allocating money commensurate with need.

In 2017, with nearly 20 years’ experience investing and administering programs, coupled with declining Proposition 10 revenues, our 2017–2022 strategic planning priorities were: 1) organizational sustainability and 2) an assessment of the local early childhood system and its responsiveness to families with young children. First 5 engaged in an extensive strategic planning process that included parent, stakeholder, Commission, staff, and community engagement. The feedback cemented our focus on a “systems building approach” with the dual priorities of mitigating the persistent racial and economic inequities facing our families and improving child outcomes. As a result, we adopted a “whole community, whole family, whole child” approach, which incorporated each of the elements identified in the early childhood system of care (see Figure 1 on page 7). We enhanced our organizational capacity to engage in systems building by: 1) centering community need and voice in our data, research, and investments; 2) strengthening our policy advocacy engagement; and 3) leveraging federal, state, and local funds to ensure sustainability and scale of programming vital to an early childhood system.

Defining Systems Building

Systems initiatives are organized efforts to improve a system and its impacts. They can be publicly or privately funded or a combination of the two. Systems initiatives in the early childhood field may have different labels, such as systems building, systems change, or systems reform. Yet systems initiatives are best understood by their focus or by the areas of the system they are trying to improve. Specifically, an early childhood systems initiative might focus on one or more of the following five areas:

<p>Context: Improving the political context that surrounds the system so it produces the policy and funding changes needed to create and sustain it.</p>	<p>Components: Establishing high-performance programs and services that produce results for children and families.</p>	<p>Connections: Creating strong linkages across system components that further improve results for children and families.</p>	<p>Infrastructure: Developing the supports systems needed to function effectively and with quality.</p>	<p>Scale: Ensuring a comprehensive system is available to as many people as possible.</p>
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From the [Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide \(hhs.gov\)](https://hhs.gov)

Early Childhood System of Care

Within the Early Childhood System, our role is to:

FUND organizations and initiatives that are mission- and vision-aligned, and part of a community-based, family-informed early childhood system.

PARTNER with parents, caregivers, communities, early childhood providers, organizations, and public agencies in service to an accessible, effective, and responsive early childhood system.

ADMINISTER programs for young children and families that offer services, navigation, and care coordination; support and connections to resources; and training and capacity building for providers.

ADVOCATE to scale and sustain effective programs and for public policies grounded in equity and justice.

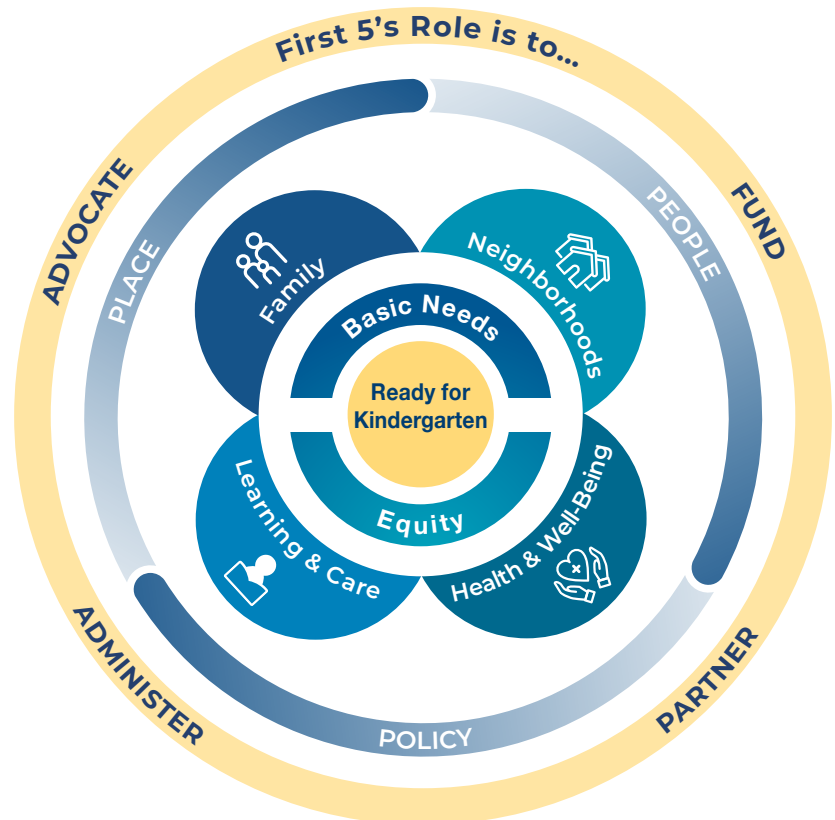
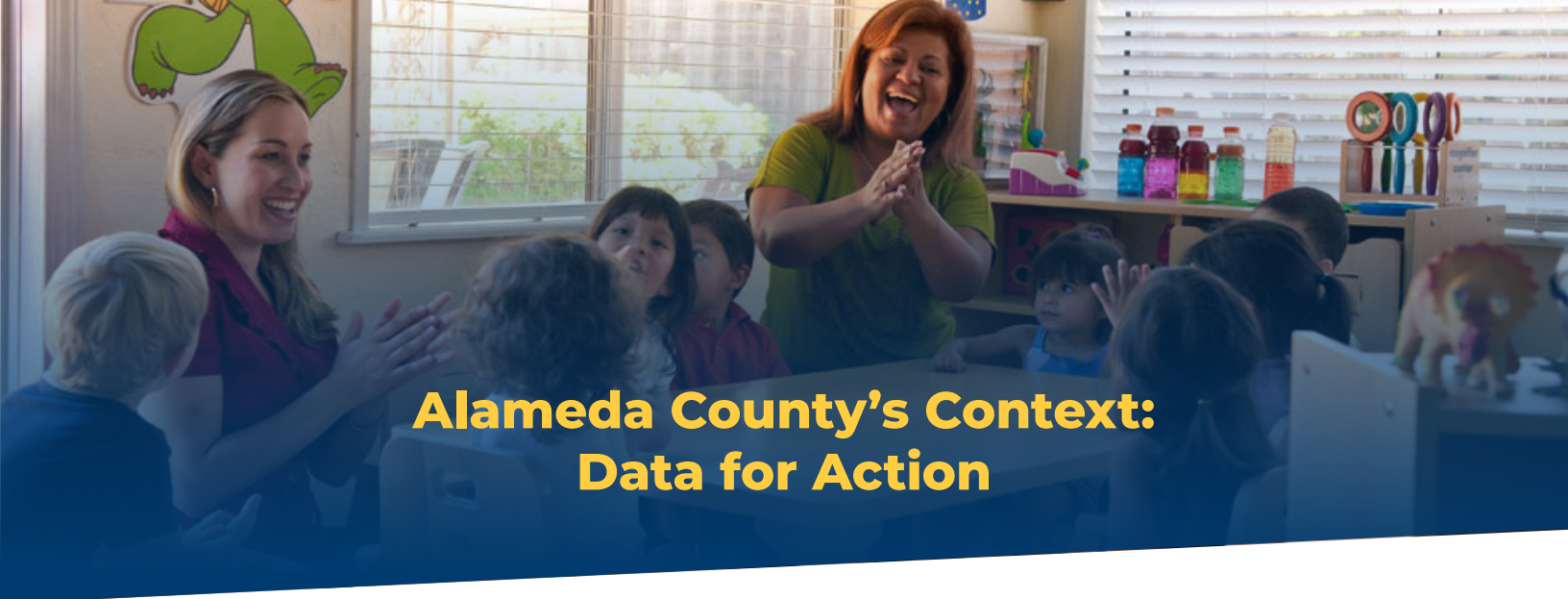


Figure 1. An early childhood system of care cultivates community and family conditions for children's kindergarten readiness.

After taking inventory of our impact, local system opportunities, and the needs of families and children, in the 2017–2022 Strategic Plan, First 5 has:

- Integrated signature programs into larger systems when applicable and sunset programs when appropriate
- Launched substantial investments in community-directed, place-based efforts
- Increased the agency's focus and capacity in policy advocacy, data, and research for action
- Identified potential public system partners to scale proven strategies, Early Care and Education, and Early Identification



Alameda County's Context: Data for Action

Alameda County's context and our analysis of the public policy levers by which conditions for families can be improved have informed our embrace of equity as the center of our work.

Coupled with a decline in Proposition 10 tobacco revenues, First 5 has adopted a **systems change approach** strategy to address the underlying structural issues—the root causes—affecting communities, families, and children.

Alameda County Family Demographics



households with children under age 6 (2019)²



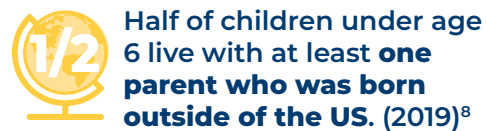
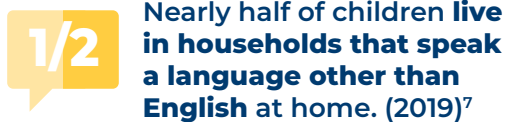
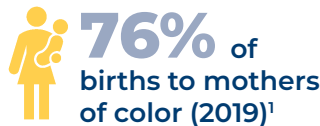
children under age 6 (2019)²



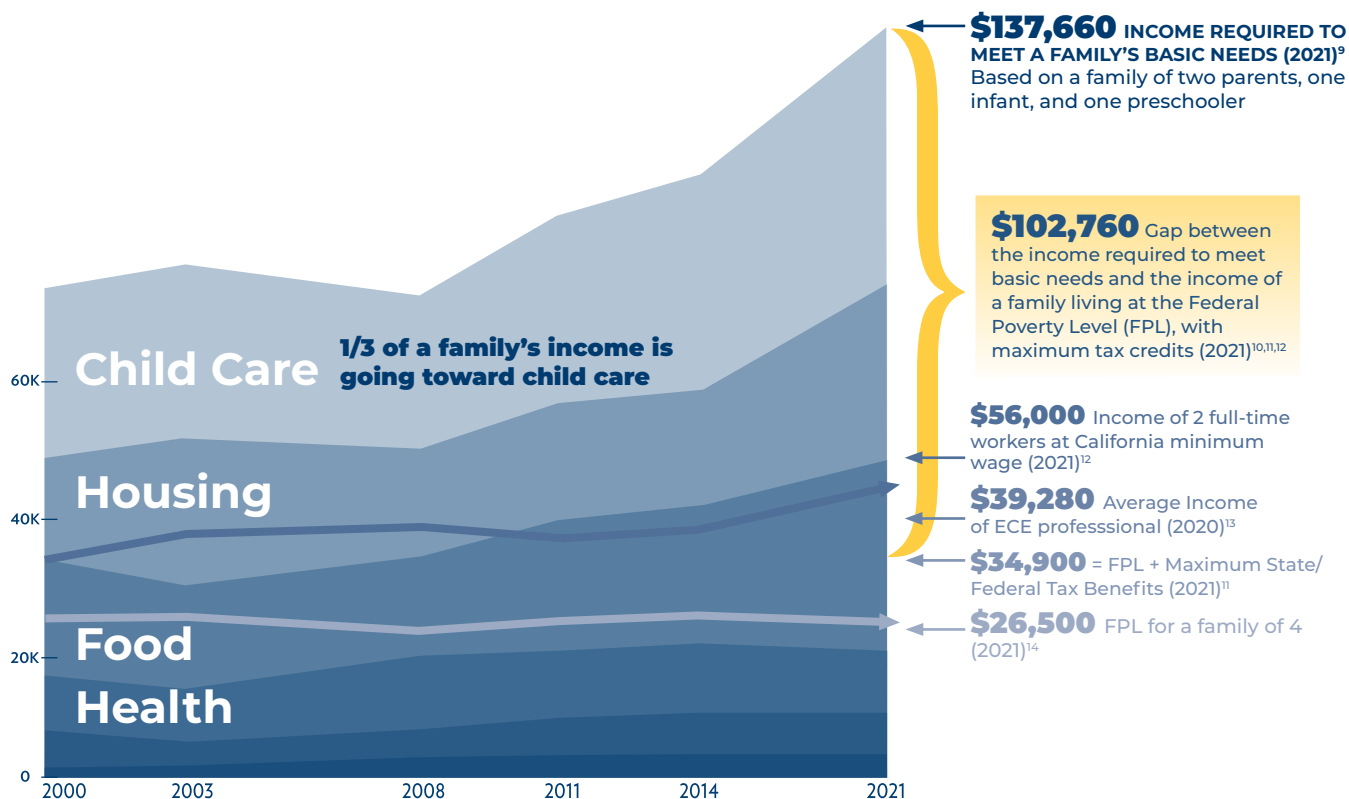
of total population (1,656,591) under age 6 (2020,2021)^{3,4}



births (2019)⁵



Financial Realities of Families in Alameda County



Children 0-6 Enrolled in Public Benefits in Alameda County (2021)¹⁵

+ **Medi-Cal 32,008**
(28% of total children 0-6)

🍏 **CalFresh 12,182**
(11% of total children 0-6)

Children and women, especially those who identify as people of color, bear the brunt of structural inequities.

👨👩👧👦 Approximately **1 in 10** children under 6 lives below the Federal Poverty Level. (2019)¹⁶

👩👧👦 In Alameda County and the Bay Area, more than **1 in 3** women are caught in financial precarity.¹⁷

🏠🏠 **3 out of 4** households struggling to meet their basic needs in Alameda County have a head of household that identifies as a **person of color**.¹⁷

The cost of living continues to rise at an unsustainable rate.

💰 **68%** increase in child care cost (2014–2021)¹⁷



💰 **34%** increase in median family income (2000–2019)¹⁸

🏠 **50%** of renters pay more than 1/3 of their income for rent. (2019)¹⁹

Structural Inequities Lead to Racial Disparities

Maternal and Newborn Health²⁰



Black women and birthing people are 3x more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth and to experience more maternal health complications.

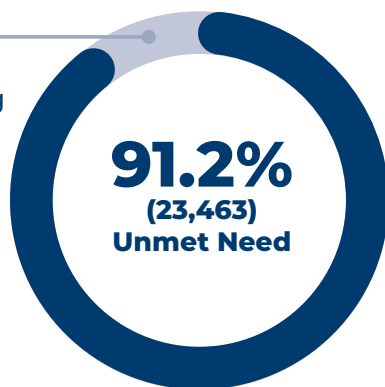


Black babies are 3-4 times more likely to be born too early, too small, or to die before their first birthday.

Access to Child Care

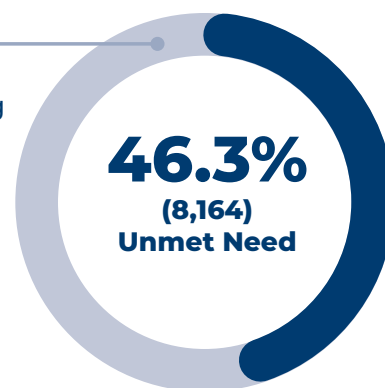
Infant/Toddler Unmet Need for Subsidized Care (2021)²¹

8.8% (2,257)
Number of Eligible Children Accessing Subsidized Care



Preschool Unmet Need for Subsidized Care (2021)²¹

53.7% (9,465)
Number of Eligible Children Accessing Subsidized Care



Child Care Professionals Work in a Critical and Fragile System

We estimate that **the Alameda County ECE field lost \$395 million in fiscal year 2020–2021 alone** (\$220 million without taking the increased cost of providing care into consideration) and continues to experience losses in the current fiscal year.²²



96%

of Alameda County ECE educators identify as women. (2020)¹³



79%

of Alameda County ECE educators identify as women of color. (2020)¹³



87%

of ECE educators are considered very low income for Alameda County. (2020)¹³



20%

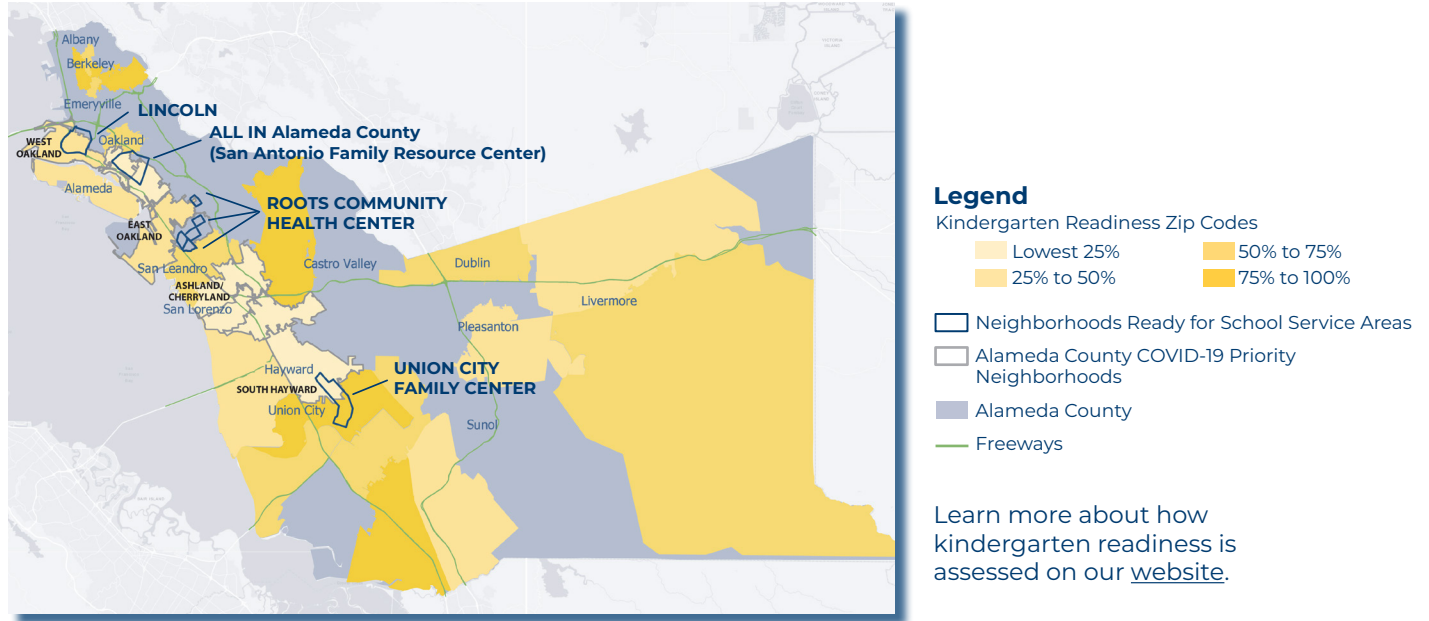
of providers at child care centers reported earning less than \$15 per hour. (2020)¹³

In 2020, **California increased reimbursement rates**, which could bring an increase of more than \$20 million countywide to subsidized child care programs for children from birth to age five. Yet the **new rates are still far below the true cost of care.**²³

Child Outcomes

We find that differences in kindergarten readiness are largely attributable to inequities in access to resources. The greatest moveable factor continues to be child health and well-being, which is tied to socioeconomics, housing stability, and stress among parents/caregivers.¹

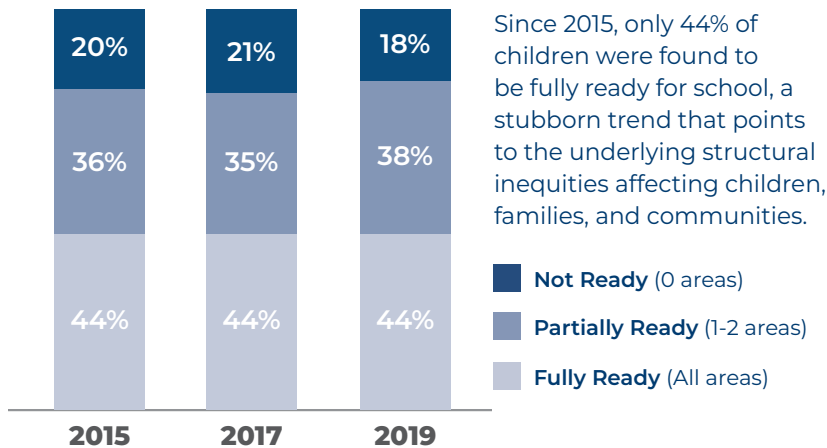
Kindergarten Readiness (2019)¹



*Zip codes with fewer than 5 participants are not shown.

**Readiness scores represent individuals living in the zip code and do not represent the overall readiness of children in that zip code.

Kindergarten Readiness 2015–2019¹



Since 2015, only 44% of children were found to be fully ready for school, a stubborn trend that points to the underlying structural inequities affecting children, families, and communities.

Achievement gaps persist for children who are not ready for kindergarten.



4 in 5

children who are not ready for kindergarten continue to struggle academically in third grade. (2018)²⁴



MEETING THIS MOMENT IN TIME

In 2020, First 5's operating context changed dramatically.

The COVID-19 pandemic decimated our fragile, underfunded, and fragmented safety net. The vital links between families and their local economic, health, and social supports were severed. Families experienced historic levels of job loss, child care and school closures, health care challenges, and food and housing insecurity. Between March 2020 and January 2021, an estimated 153 (7%) of licensed child care facilities in Alameda County closed permanently.²⁵ Social distancing, remote learning, and quarantine policies compounded the isolation and stress endured by low- to moderate-income families and caregivers. The lack of access to in-person learning, play, and interaction negatively impacted children's learning, growth, and development. The pandemic exacerbated persistent health and economic inequities that disproportionately impacted Black and Brown communities, creating increased risks for families' economic security, emotional well-being, educational progress, health, and safety.

Child Poverty 0-5 & COVID-19 Rates^{26,27}



Summary of Strategic Plan Stakeholder Feedback

Build/evolve the early childhood system.

Families and communities have strengths to build upon and should be valued, listened to, and leveraged.

Underlying structural inequities by race and class are impacting families, providers, and communities.



Families



Staff



Community
Data



Stakeholder
Interviews

PRIORITIES FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES

A “seamless” system that addresses basic needs (i.e., food, housing, transportation), child care, health and mental health/social connections

PRIORITIES FOR SUPPORTING PROVIDERS

Wages and professional development, flexible funding, and organizational capacity building

PRIORITIES FOR FIRST 5

- Define and clarify role
- Emphasize partnerships with families, community, community-based organizations, and systems
- Leverage place-based investments and consider other opportunities by place and population
- Use data and policy advocacy in partnership with community for systems change
- Build agency capacity to meet new need and opportunity
- Support staff leadership and well-being

PRIORITIES FOR SYSTEMS

- Invest in families with young children
- Coordinate resources for a system that is responsive and accessible
- Invest in community infrastructure that supports families (housing, libraries, parks)

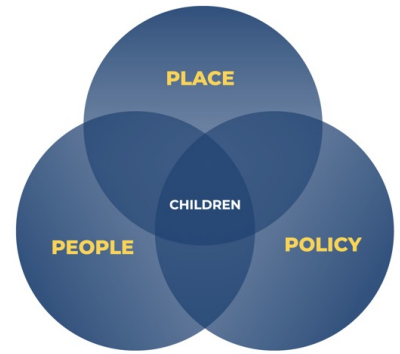


OUR APPROACH

We will be successful when all children in Alameda County are ready for kindergarten.

Our work is to ensure that policies, systems, communities, and schools are ready to support families and children to position them for lifelong success.

We have learned a lot over the last 20 years about the connection between community conditions and children’s outcomes. Given our mission and our analysis of opportunities for impact, we have adopted a Place-People-Policy framework to guide our investment in children and families in the next five years toward building an early childhood system of care.



PLACE

We believe that the health and well-being of children and their families are strongly influenced by the social and economic conditions of their neighborhoods. Strong, supportive communities help children and families thrive. We invest in programs and policies that promote economically prosperous and vibrant environments that afford access to opportunities and promote well-being by:

- Building on Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) place-based investments
- Integrating services across First 5’s targeted neighborhoods, in alignment with Alameda County’s priority zip codes
- Strengthening place-based systems change and care coordination for families in NRFS sites

“What really matters is childhood environment, rather than where you live as an adult. Every extra year of exposure to a positive childhood environment makes a significant impact on long-term outcomes.”

– Dr. Raj Chetty

From Dr. Chetty’s presentation as part of the 2021 First 5 Alameda County Commission Speaker Series

PEOPLE

We believe caregivers are the experts on their needs and the needs of their children and families. We work with them to identify their strengths, resources, and needs. We partner with them to reinforce their family and community supports and improve the effectiveness of our investments by:

- Investing in parent partnership and leadership
- Connecting families to basic needs and resources
- Promoting early screening and care coordination to address social-emotional, trauma, or developmental concerns
- Fostering family well-being through innovative parent-centered programming
- Maintaining comprehensive, quality early childhood training content to providers, parents/caregivers, and community in line with our commitment to equity

“The financial and material hardships households are experiencing are negatively impacting children because they are disrupting the well-being of caregivers.”

– Dr. Philip Fisher, RAPID-EC

“We would want anyone working with children to be healthy and supported and as present with children as they possibly can be. We have to provide the conditions for them to do so.”

– Dr. Lea Austin, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley

POLICY

We believe that First 5’s policy work should address structural racism and childhood poverty and their impact on child development and family well-being. Furthermore, our policy work is most effective when families are engaged in its development and active in a leadership role. We believe that data, research, and evaluation should be conducted in partnership with the community, informing an action agenda for advocacy and organizing. We believe that public systems should be accessible, effective, and responsive to families’ needs. We take a systems change approach by advancing solutions that move the early childhood system from a patchwork of services to an integrated ecosystem. We build the early childhood system of care by:

- Measuring continuous improvement in service to equity
- Evolving quality early care and education and capacity-building for the field
- Expanding local pediatric strategies and systems care coordination capabilities (through Help Me Grow and Developmental and Legal Understanding for Everyone, DULCE)
- Using data and policy advocacy to advance local, state, and national investments in people, place, and systems
- Preparing the agency to administer Measure C ([Learn more about Measure C on page 37.](#)) and other local, state, and federal funding initiatives

With this scaffolding in place, First 5 is well-positioned to build out the early childhood system of care. We will continue this transformation by partnering with parents, caregivers, community, providers, and public systems to address the underlying inequities. We will leverage the assets in Alameda County and seize the opportunity of once-in-a-generation federal, state, and local investments to build a more integrated early childhood system.



COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

First 5 is committed to being an anti-racist organization.

Our 2017–2022 Strategic Plan explicitly named equity as a central component of our work. Inequity negatively impacts the health and well-being of children and families. We promote equity in our organization and within the community broadly. Equity informs our hiring, staff development, investments, training, community partnerships, program design and evaluation, and policy advocacy.

We invest in and advocate for programs and policies that:

- 1) Address structural racism and economic inequity**
- 2) Ensure basic family needs are met**
- 3) Increase access to quality health, mental health, housing, food, transportation, jobs, child care, and educational experiences**
- 4) Foster economically stable communities and opportunities for social connections**

Our equity work is an ongoing march toward justice and equality. In 2017 and 2018, we adopted [resolutions opposing inhumane immigration practices](#) and the enforcement threats to immigrant families by the federal government. In June 2020, the First 5 Alameda County Commission reaffirmed this commitment to equity by adopting a [resolution on equity and social justice](#) to stand united with our Black and African-American colleagues, partners, and the entire Black community against racism in all its forms. We consider these resolutions as public commitments by which we hold ourselves accountable.

In our 2022–2027 Strategic Plan, our agency is continuing a long-term, agencywide learning process to create a shared definition of equity that will guide us in our next steps in this journey. This work will guide how we “operationalize” equity across and throughout the agency’s strategies, programs, and operations. Our equity practices will continue to evolve as we deepen our understanding of the ways systems of oppression appear in organizations and interpersonal relationships.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

In conjunction with our agencywide equity work, First 5 will refine our stakeholder partnership approach. First 5 defines stakeholder partnership as the authentic and intentional work to develop responsive and reciprocal practices and relationships—with parents, caregivers, providers, and community so that First 5 strategies reflect a collective community vision.

Through our practices, we will increase parent and community engagement to promote equity and broader systems change. This agencywide commitment is represented in all of our strategies, and we are nurturing our continued growth in this area to fulfill our commitment.

In the years ahead, we commit to:

- Adopt agency principles for stakeholder partnership in all facets of our work. We will examine existing models and frameworks, including those introduced via the First 5 Association, the Ripples of Transformation, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy's manifesto for parent engagement to inform the development of agency principles.
- Engage in a cross-agency effort to operationalize shared equity principles and goals to align our work. Assess our current approach and practices including resources to support parent, community, and stakeholder participation.
- First 5 will provide the necessary resources and internal organizational capacity to support this agencywide commitment.





2022–2031 STRATEGIC PLAN PARAMETERS & FINANCIAL PICTURE

First 5 identified the following planning assumptions and parameters, approved by the Commission to guide the development of this document.

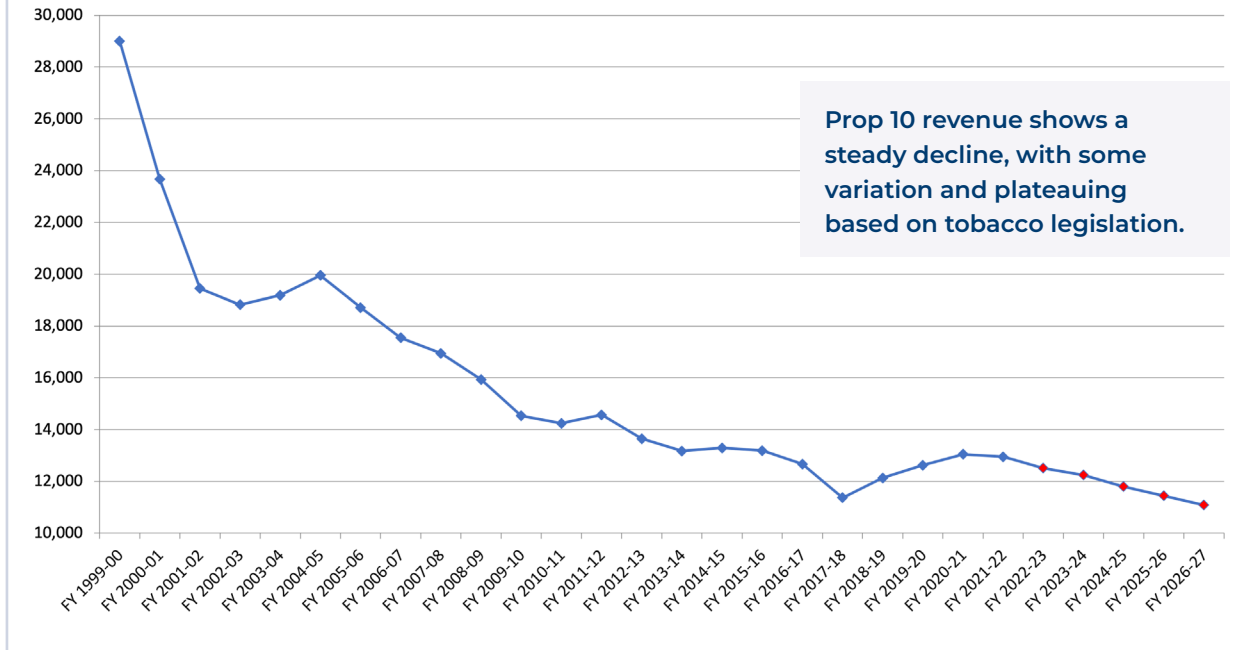
THEY ARE:

- Continue to diversify revenue to support building an early childhood system, including partnerships with managed care, Social Services, Health Care Services Agency, and other public entities to scale First 5 programs fundamental to an early childhood system, e.g., Help Me Grow, DULCE, Fatherhood, ECE workforce development, Measure C. This includes leveraging First 5's infrastructure (financial, contract, staff expertise) to build out the early childhood system.
- Maintain current funding levels, temporarily using our sustainability fund to offset Proposition 10 reductions while planning for diversified revenue sources and scale of successful programs.
- Utilize a largely contracted and community-based, equity-focused model for Proposition 10-funded activities. Available Proposition 10 funds can be used to seed new programs, support proof-of-concept strategies for policy and systems change, and provide funding to community-led initiatives. As a declining revenue source, it is not a sustainable funding stream to scale direct services staffed by First 5, or those we consider part of the county safety net.
- Upon adoption of Alameda County's Measure C, the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan would be substantively revised. The Measure C-mandated program plan will be developed in partnership with a Community Advisory Council (still to be seated).



Prop 10 Revenue 1999-2027

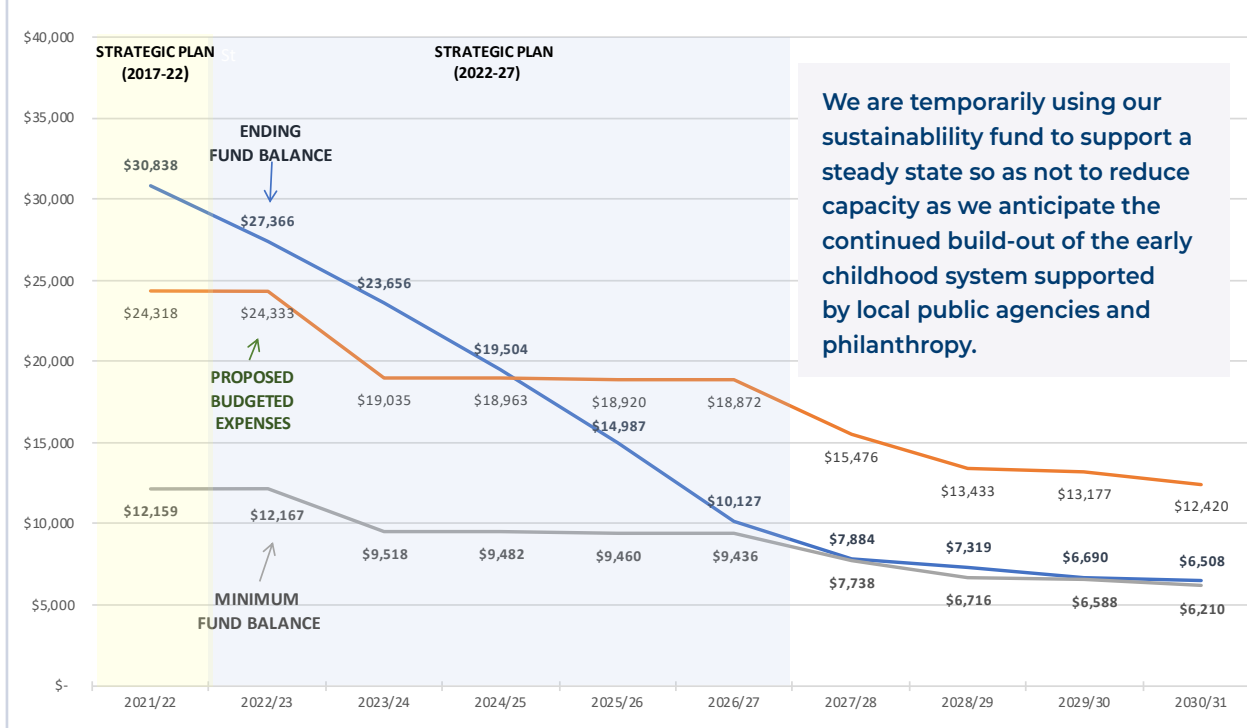
ACTUAL AND PROJECTED PROP 10 REVENUE IN MILLIONS



Source: First 5 California, May 2021

Long Range Financial Plan FY 2022-2031

BUDGET AND FUND BALANCE IN MILLIONS



The Long Range Financial Plan FY 2022-2031 has been prepared based on information available as of May 2022.



Overview

Since 2017, First 5 has strategically enhanced its organizational capacity to engage in systems building by:

- 1) Increasing organizational capacity to center community needs and voices
- 2) Engaging in policy advocacy
- 3) Leveraging federal, state, and local funds to ensure sustainability and scale of programming vital to an early childhood system

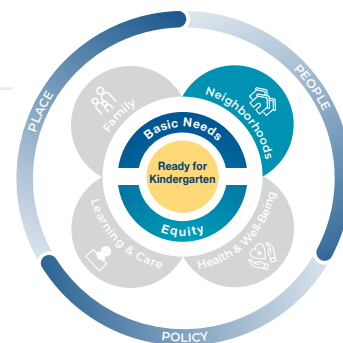
The evolution of First 5's systems building work has required us to take a multi-pronged approach, incorporating place-based investments, administration of programs, and building policy, data, evaluation, and communications capacity to articulate impact and advocate for resources.²⁸ Using the Place-People-Policy implementation framework, First 5 is catalyzing increased access to services and supporting family-friendly community conditions. This enabled First 5 to be nimble in our response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, alongside support of building an early childhood system in service to community, family, and child well-being.



Neighborhoods Ready for School

PURPOSE

Thriving neighborhoods are an essential component of an early childhood system. First 5's Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) strategy is a place-based investment, asset building, and policy response to the relationship and interplay between neighborhood conditions, family and child well-being, and the structural factors that contribute to overall health, development, and kindergarten readiness. The NRFS strategy funds trusted community-based organizations using an equity index to prioritize neighborhoods with young children that have been historically marginalized due to racist, classist systems and policies.



Our 2019 Kindergarten Readiness study confirmed the importance of this place-based approach. We found that neighborhood assets, especially the presence of mutual support among community members, along with sidewalks, walking paths, and libraries, significantly boost children's school readiness.¹ Families earning at least \$50,000 per year were significantly more likely than lower income families to report the availability of each asset in their neighborhood. Higher income families reported 6.1–6.7 assets in their neighborhoods, while lower income families reported 4.5–5.5 assets. Children in both low-income families and higher-income families had significantly higher kindergarten readiness if they also lived in asset-rich neighborhoods.

The NRFS strategy employs a trust-based philanthropy model that recognizes and prioritizes the knowledge and wisdom of those who live and work within communities. Community stakeholders are best positioned to define their own needs, appropriate responses, and their role in policy advocacy. **The key principles guiding this place-based community capacity building and infrastructure are:**

- Strengthening economic supports and basic needs, food and supply distribution during COVID-19 in service to systems change
- Increasing coordination of family services across systems, family navigation, and connection to resources
- Directing early childhood programs and services, including virtual supports
- Expanding the physical infrastructure to promote safe spaces for young children and their families
- Fostering family leadership and civic engagement
- Building partnerships among community organizations and government
- Supporting policy advocacy efforts catalyzed and led by residents



GOALS

- Work with NRFS sites to identify priorities and current needs post-COVID-19 and make any needed refinements to the structure of our engagement.
- Concentrate First 5 programs in NRFS catchment areas to leverage investments and generate multiplier effect across the neighborhoods.
- Develop an essential data set for reporting and analysis to understand impact, identify areas for continuous improvement, and ease the reporting burden on grantees.
- Invest in school district, service provider capacity and partnerships, and community infrastructure that supports families (housing, libraries, parks) and kindergarten readiness.
- In collaboration with NRFS agencies use the qualitative and quantitative data collected from neighborhood partners and other sources to advocate for policy and systems changes that will help to improve conditions for families with young children.
- Showcase successes and local stories that demonstrate effectiveness to support sustainability of the NRFS models.



Quality Early Care and Education (ECE)

PURPOSE

Early Care and Education (ECE) is a cornerstone of the early childhood system. ECE enables parents to work outside the home and is a vital part of the local economy. It is an under-resourced and underappreciated profession.

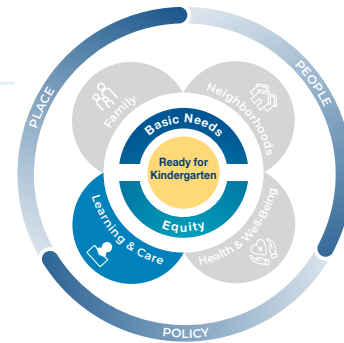
Participation in ECE is a leading factor in predicting kindergarten readiness, as research has shown that **participation in ECE significantly narrowed readiness gaps.**¹ Our biannual Kindergarten Readiness studies have consistently found less than half of children in Alameda County are fully ready for kindergarten, largely due to socioeconomic factors tied to structural racism, with particular consequences for African-American and Latinx children.

Affordability is a major barrier to accessing ECE. The cost of child care has risen 68% since 2014; a family of four in Alameda County with a preschooler and an infant pay one-third of their income toward child care costs.^{17,9} At the same time, there is a significant gap in access to subsidies for income-eligible families with an unmet need in 2018 of 91% of eligible infants and 46% of eligible preschool children in Alameda County.²¹ The pandemic worsened existing inequities, with families facing historic levels of job loss, school and child care closures, and food insecurity.

ECE professionals are an underpaid and aging workforce, with high attrition rates. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of Alameda County ECE professionals, 79% of whom identify as Black, Indigenous, or other women of color, are considered very low-income for the county.¹³ Across the county, the number of licensed family child care providers declined by 34% between 2007 and 2019.²¹ These operational challenges increased in the pandemic. We estimate that the Alameda County ECE field lost \$395 million in FY2020-21 alone (\$220 million without taking into consideration the increased cost of providing care) and these losses are expected to continue in the current fiscal year.²²

High-quality ECE and licensed and community-based childhood development programming are key components of the early childhood system of care. The Quality ECE (QECE) strategy provides quality improvement supports for the mixed delivery system—centers, family child care (FCC) providers, and family friend and neighbor (FFN) providers—with coaching, training, professional development, technical assistance, and financial incentives and supports that include learning networks for each type of child care delivery setting, ensuring technical support, and fostering leadership and community. First 5 also partners with libraries and family resource centers to support quality developmental programming for those children who are not in a licensed early educational setting.

We recognize that scarcity of public resources limits the existence of and access to quality child care and quality community-based programming. As a result, we prioritize those caring for children receiving subsidies and those who have historically been unable to access QECE supports, particularly FCCs and FFNs.



We recognize the strengths and needs of dual-language learners and promote inclusive practices in classrooms to meet the requirements of children with special needs, so that all early learners are positioned for success.

Finally, we are updating our child care facilities census and charting the ECE workforce development needs. In addition, First 5 is creating opportunities to generate interest and professionalization of these important roles by creating apprenticeship programs as a pathway to recruit people new to the field and retain current teachers.

GOALS

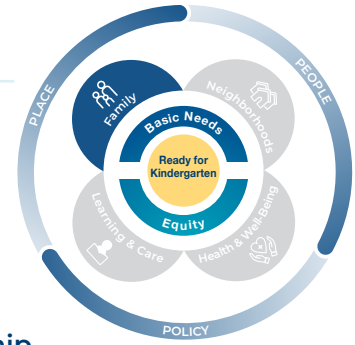
- Co-design with parents, providers, and community partners a more equity-informed approach to quality rating and Quality, Rating, and Improvement Systems (QRIS) in the mixed delivery system.
- Shift First 5's resources from formal assessment and rating to training, professional learning communities, curriculum support, coaching, professional development, stipends, and other financial supports, where allowable.
- Provide core infrastructure support to the local Quality Counts California activities in Alameda County and maintain county readiness for additional partnership and funding opportunities.
- Increase the number of FCC and FFN providers participating in Quality Counts, especially those serving low-income, dual-language learners, children with special needs, and children experiencing homelessness.
- Expand partnerships with parks and recreation departments and libraries to serve children outside of formal care settings, while identifying ways to increase and improve place-based support for FFN and FCC in Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) settings/neighborhoods.
- Increase collaboration between QECE and other First 5 programs and investments, including NRFS, Help Me Grow, Parent Partnership, and Fatherhood.
- Leverage and streamline, in partnership with Policy, Planning, and Evaluation staff, the local use of ECE data systems, including Hubbe and the California ECE Workforce Registry, to strengthen the collection of data and to better support planning, data decolonization, and tools for community partners and the ECE field.
- Conduct and promote an ECE Facilities Needs Assessment to develop strategies to increase capacity and quality of facilities and infrastructure in key areas of unmet need.
- Monitor, in partnership with Policy, Planning and Evaluation staff, the implementation of TK-Universal Pre-K and support plans that incorporate best practices for meeting family and children's needs and support the mixed delivery system.
- Conduct a workforce landscape study, in partnership with the ECE Planning Council, Alameda County Office of Education, and community stakeholders, to develop county strategies for leveraging state and local resources to address ECE workforce development pathways (i.e., apprenticeships, credentialing, higher education cohorts, etc.).



Parent Partnership

PURPOSE

Family Leadership is one of the core components of an early childhood system, as it enhances parents' leadership and advocacy in early childhood programs and at home. First 5's redefined Parent Partnership strategy invests in direct services to families and children with a focus on maternal and child health and the 0-3 years and uses parent leadership to inform programming and investments. The Parent Partnership strategy increases access and reduces disparities stemming from inequities through program design, investments, and systems partnerships.



Inequities in policies, systems, and practices with roots in structural racism have an impact on families and children. Black women and birthing people are three times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth and to experience more maternal health complications.²⁰ Black babies are three to four times more likely to be born too early, too small, or to die before their first birthday.²⁰ Given the deep disparities and recognizing that the period from birth to age five is a critical time for children and families, First 5 is committed to programming, investments, and engagements that seek to improve underlying structural conditions and outcomes.

The revised Parent Partnership strategy includes: 1) formulating parent-advised investments in programs, supports, and services that promote equity in birth outcomes, maternal and child health, family well-being, and kindergarten readiness, 2) ensuring parents representing the diversity of languages in Alameda County can be active partners through interpretation and translation, and 3) building partnerships with maternal and child health-serving agencies and organizations.

GOALS

- Collaborate with parents and systems partners to define type of investment, program approach, and guiding frameworks to increase focus on birth equity, Black Maternal Morbidity and Mortality, and promoting equity in the 0-3 space.
- Assess First 5's Cultural Access Services (CAS) structure within the agency to best meet the diverse interpretation and translation needs of families, providers, and contractors.
- Identify emerging opportunities, legislative and budgetary, related to maternal health and birth equity to inform program design, policy advocacy, and the evolution of the local early childhood system.
- Employ data and lessons learned in collaboration with parents, staff, and partners to:
 - Advocate for scaling of DULCE, and the importance of legal, medical, and social services partnerships to address the social determinants of health.
 - Demonstrate how parent partnership initiatives have improved outcomes for children and families to make a case for sustainability and systems change.

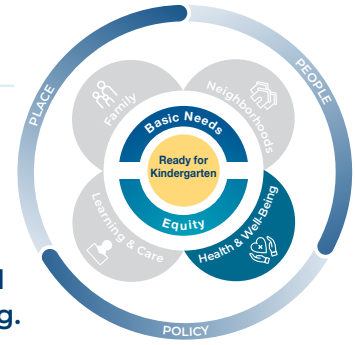




Early Identification, Screening, and Care Coordination

PURPOSE

Comprehensive Health and Development is a key component of the early childhood system. First 5's Early Identification, Screening, and Care Coordination (EISCC) strategy focuses on achieving a common goal that all children in Alameda County grow up healthy, thriving, and strong. Decades of national research have demonstrated that early childhood development and overall well-being are affected by the social determinants of health including community and environmental conditions, racism, poverty, stress, relationships, access to resources, and education.



There are more than 32,000 low-income children under age six enrolled in Medi-Cal in Alameda County.¹⁵ While Alameda County has been a state leader in enrolling income-eligible children in public health coverage, approximately one in three are not engaging in or receiving regular pediatric preventive care, including but not limited to well-child care and early childhood screenings.²⁹ Approximately 85% of children served through Help Me Grow, First 5's centerpiece program of this strategy, are insured through Medi-Cal, and 24% of families served were also referred to services for basic needs, such as food, housing, health care, and child care.³⁰

Given this landscape, the primary goal of this strategy is to connect and integrate public and community screening, referral, and response resources. Our focus is to engage, assess, and connect children, especially Medi-Cal enrolled families, to pediatric preventative care, medically-necessary services, and community-based programming and support.

Fundamental to this strategy is maximizing the family's pediatric visit. Pediatric visits are an entry point to care management, resource referral, and other community supports. Research has shown that expanding community-based care management improves overall family health and well-being.³¹

The EISCC strategy fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to leverage data and develop targeted strategies to fill service gaps, reduce barriers, and advance racial equity, thereby ensuring equitable access to supports and benefits.

First 5 adopted the nationally recognized Help Me Grow model as the primary implementation framework for the EISCC strategy. The HMG program provides:

- Training and technical assistance to providers serving the Medi-Cal pediatric population (0-5) in Alameda County
- Implementation and referral assistance to pediatric and early child care and education providers with recommended developmental, social-emotional, and/or Adverse Childhood Experiences Screenings (ACEs)
- Multilingual access to HMG's Central Access Point to provide support and care coordination to parents/caregivers for families of children with an identified need for developmental, behavioral, or other resources and services
- Outreach and convenings to build a coordinated network of services and promote awareness of HMG

GOALS

- Build a menu of navigation services to provide support to families enrolled in Medi-Cal and other insurance providers for referrals to early intervention, community resources, family support, and basic needs.
- Recommend strategies for increasing agency and HMG community capacity to address unmet needs, with a focus on First 5's Neighborhoods Ready for School catchment areas and other high-need areas in the county.
- Enhance the scope of Help Me Grow program training, screening, and resource referral activities to include social needs, support for pregnant and parenting populations, and those who have been exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), with a particular emphasis on children insured through Medi-Cal.
- Expand outreach and education that increases provider, community-based organization, and partner agencies understanding of individual and community conditions (such as social determinants of health and protective factors) that impact child development, well-being, and kindergarten readiness.
- Assess opportunity and risks associated with funding streams that support EISCC, in particular, the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) program.
- Develop strategy and approach to enhance partnerships with early childhood system providers across health and education agencies, including Alameda Alliance for Health, Health Care Services Agency, Regional Center, and Local Educational Agencies to better connect supports and improve experiences for families.
- Align and expand care coordination through pediatric delivery system programs and partnerships (e.g., HMG and Development and Legal Understanding for Everyone, DULCE).
- Assess opportunities for care coordination through early care and education, particularly with the expansion of Universal Transitional Kindergarten.
- Evaluate new technology solutions, beginning with resource directory and referral platforms, to support improved coordination and communication among parents/families, providers, managed care plans, and First 5.





Fatherhood

PURPOSE

First 5's Fatherhood program is a unique approach to the early childhood system of care's family leadership principles. Historically, early childhood and family and community support programs have focused on serving mothers and children; in most cases, this unintentionally leaves fathers and father-figures out of the equation.

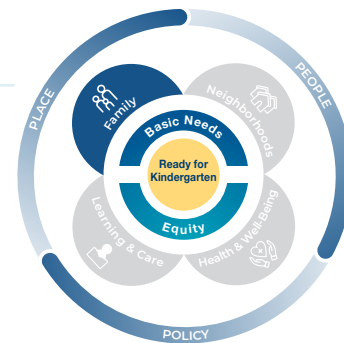
The Fatherhood program raises awareness of the benefits of the active role that fathers and father-figures have in early childhood development. We have focused on strengthening collaboration with public systems and community-based organizations to promote and acknowledge the critical roles fathers and father-figures can play. To increase acceptance of and the experiences of fathers and father-figures participating in child development activities, First 5 sponsors training, support groups, and technical assistance geared toward the development of high-quality, father-centered services.

Our Kindergarten Readiness studies have confirmed locally what the national research indicates. High-quality, involved fathering by dads who live in the child's home and apart, has strong, positive impacts on a child's development, including academic achievement, emotional well-being, and behavior.^{32, 33} Locally, we found that fathers who accessed a greater number of community resources (parks, libraries, and museums) with their children contributed to their child's greater readiness for kindergarten.²¹

The Fatherhood program supports service providers with training that fosters healthy co-parenting relationships to ensure that parents are functioning as a team. High-functioning, healthier co-parenting relationships support young children's optimal development and bolster their social and emotional learning. These skills and interactions are shown to improve children's cognitive skills, which leads to increased kindergarten readiness.

GOALS

- Incorporate Fatherhood and Father-Friendly Principles into First 5 structures and infuse Fatherhood strategies into First 5 programs: Neighborhoods Ready for School, Help Me Grow, Parent Leadership, and Quality ECE.
- Engage fathers and male providers to inform the development of the Healthy Relationship Principles (HRP) tools to support providers with the integration of HRP in work with families and provide training on HRP.
- Position the Fatherhood work for sustainability and scale through fund development and public systems partnerships.
- Promote integration of Father-Friendly Principles in public and community-based systems of care.
- Identify strategies to strengthen internal collaboration and referral pathways for additional public system support connecting fathers to employment, financial education, health, and housing.





AGENCY STRATEGIES

Agency Strategy: Training

PURPOSE

A diverse, well-informed, and well-trained provider and parent community are critical elements of the early childhood system. In partnership with First 5 staff and community, First 5's Training department identifies, coordinates, and delivers instructional content, skill-building workshops, and information sessions to build the capacity of the early childhood system in Alameda County.

Our 2019 Kindergarten Readiness study found that fewer than half of the kindergarten teachers surveyed had received training related to children with special needs, trauma-informed care, cultural humility, and family engagement. Pediatricians have historically had limited specialized training on child development mental and behavioral health.^{34,35} The same holds true for other direct service workers who serve young children and their families.³⁶ Equally important, parents and caregivers benefit from, and are eager for, information on topics relevant to their young children, but often do not know how to obtain it.³⁷

The Training department delivers content aimed at supporting agency priorities and community needs. The Training team provides technical assistance to staff and community partners in best practices for identifying, planning, delivering, and evaluating educational programming.

GOALS

- Reassess training offerings to ensure greater alignment with agency and community priorities and needs to ensure programming is focused on areas critical to sustainability of key investments and ongoing service provision.
- Assist human resources with implementation of staff trainings ranging from professional development and technical assistance directly linked to agency strategy and program goals.
- Incorporate equity framework into content development and mode of delivery to increase reach into underrepresented child care providers.

Agency Strategy: Policy and Advocacy

PURPOSE

First 5's Policy and Advocacy strategy utilizes analysis, data, information, and coalitions to support the evolution of an equity-centered local early childhood system. We engage in advocacy to scale and sustain effective programs and to promote public policies grounded in equity and justice.

Our policy work seeks to shape, support, and sustain policies that proactively address the needs of families with young children and their caregivers in public systems. We anchor our policy efforts to our equity framework and the lessons learned from our program work with staff, community partners, providers, parents, and caregivers. Through our policy work, we mobilize a shared vision of an early childhood system of care that is a network of coordinated and responsive organizations that improve outcomes for children from birth to age five. First 5's biannual Kindergarten Readiness study repeatedly points to the importance of structural conditions, e.g., socioeconomic, access to early care and education, as critical to supporting children's success. In Alameda County approximately 1 in 10 children under six years lives below the Federal Poverty Level (\$26,500 for a family of four).¹⁶ It takes \$137,660 to meet the basic needs of a two-parent family with one infant and one preschooler.⁹

By understanding the legislative, budgetary, regulatory, and administrative levers of public systems, we create a multifaceted policy agenda for systems change. We leverage our resources, access, expertise, analytical skill set, and partnerships to listen, lift up needs, share successes, and evaluate impact of public investments that improve outcomes for children and families.

GOALS

- Document success of First 5's work catalyzing sustainability, scale, and systems change initiatives that are contributing to the evolution of an early childhood system of care.
- Convene partners, community, stakeholders, elected officials and their staff in discussions of policy issues and advocacy specific to families with young children, using findings from the 2021–2022 Kindergarten Readiness study and Neighborhoods Ready for School evaluation.
- Create an annual policy agenda with input from staff and community; lift messages, insights, and policy priorities learned from programs including direct service needs of parents and caregivers, and gaps in the system.
- Position First 5 with elected officials, policymakers, First 5 California, and other statewide associations as a key leader, partner, and convener in the work to advance the well-being of families with young children in Alameda County.
- Craft a policy narrative in support of increased public investments in proven strategies to support an early childhood system of care with input from community leaders and policy makers.
- Increase integration of data among systems at the local level to support data-driven policymaking with an equity and “whole community, whole family, whole child” approach.



Agency Strategy: Data and Evaluation

PURPOSE

First 5's Data and Evaluation strategy supports shared accountability, continued organizational learning, public awareness, and policy advocacy as part of our role in evolving the early childhood system.

Research and data can provide a roadmap to systems change. Our research has pointed to the underlying structural conditions and opportunities necessary to support families with young children. Our Kindergarten Readiness study shows that differences in kindergarten readiness are largely attributable to inequities of access to resources and educational experiences.¹ Our 2018 longitudinal study found that 4 out of 5 children who are not ready for kindergarten are still not caught up to grade level by third grade, pointing to the importance of early investments in children, families, and communities.²⁴

Working Definitions to Support Continued Learning and Practice:

Data Decolonization refers to practices adopted to intentionally shift focus and ownership of data collection and analysis to Indigenous, Black, and Brown communities.³⁸

Data Democratization refers to practices adopted to intentionally approach data collection and analysis with a community lens, supporting broad access to data and data analysis, including by those whom the data is about, as powerful tools for change, and eliminating unnecessary barriers to accessing and utilizing data.

We believe data, research, and evaluation are tools for making policy change, and creating a shared system and stakeholder understanding of community priorities and needs. We focus on generating and sharing data, research, and results to inform internal agency decision making and our work with partners, public policy, planning, and advocacy. Through participatory research, storytelling, and other practices consistent with data decolonization and democratization, we put the power of data back into the hands of the people. We use data to highlight community conditions, the strengths and needs of our county's youngest children, their families, and the providers who serve them, and to advance policies that promote equity.

We partner with colleagues and community stakeholders on data and evaluation efforts to identify promising practices, demonstrate effectiveness, support efforts to scale and sustain effective strategies, and promote continuous quality improvement in the early childhood system.

GOALS

- Deepen our understanding of equitable data and research practices, data decolonization, and democratization. Document learning, practices, and opportunities.
- Use First 5's biannual Kindergarten Readiness study and NRFS evaluation in collaboration with the community to inform policy advocacy and program investments.
- Streamline production and elevate dissemination of data and research products as policy and communication tools for use by external stakeholders and staff.
- Strengthen understanding and support the interconnected needs of families and communities by developing robust data sharing agreements with public agencies and other key partners.
- Identify opportunities for evaluation/research projects in collaboration with partners and community to make a case for sustainability, scale, and/or systems change.
- Streamline data collection, Results Based Accountability (RBA) measures, and reporting with an eye to information that would most meaningfully contribute to agency decision-making, continuous improvement, and the identification of promising practices.
- Complete agencywide implementation of RBA framework so staff and leadership consistently use data and research findings to inform decisions and promote continuous improvement across all programs.

Agency Strategy: Communications

PURPOSE

First 5's communications strategy builds public awareness, mobilizes support, promotes systems coordination, and advocates for investments in an equity-centered early childhood system of care. The communications department works with internal and external audiences to inform and guide key stakeholders and decisionmakers in understanding, building, and supporting an equitable, sustainable, and comprehensive early childhood system.

First 5's communications department creates compelling narratives about the importance of early childhood, positive and adverse childhood experiences, and "whole community, whole family, whole child" policy and programs. We use messages, stories, and data that point to the structural conditions, including racism and classism, underpinning children's outcomes and highlight opportunities to build thriving communities, families, and children.

First 5's communications strategy reinforces the agency's position as a leading local policy voice for children and families. Communications initiatives provide support for the early childhood system in the form of investments, capacity building, and community data to inform priorities and decision-making. We promote centralized resources, information, and services for parents, caregivers, and service providers.

First 5 advances equity and stakeholder engagement in its communications by using feedback loops to listen to and report back to community stakeholders, allowing us to:

- Create accessible content and design, using multiple languages and modalities
- Elevate community voice in communications materials
- Highlight family and community successes despite structural barriers
- Represent diverse families and family structures across all media

GOALS

- Update First 5's Communications Plan to advance equity commitment, promote programmatic success, policy advocacy, and partnerships for systems change, and to sustain and scale effective and promising programs.
- Generate and disseminate content for policymakers, advocates, and providers by producing multimedia collateral material, policy and data briefs, case studies, website, social media, and media engagement.
- Increase access to and ease of navigation of centralized information and resources for neighborhoods, families, caregivers, providers, and policymakers.





OPERATIONAL SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

First 5's Operations Division includes finance, human resources, technology, facilities, and administration. Not only do these functions support the day-to-day operations of the agency, they also allow the organization to play a backbone role to community-based organizations, providers, and public agencies that are part of the early childhood system.

These backbone capabilities are of increasing importance as First 5 adjusts its strategies and operations in light of the steady decline in Proposition 10 revenues. These functions are necessary to enable First 5 to shift away from direct services funded by Proposition 10 to a contracted and community-based model. With the competencies and capabilities detailed below, First 5 is positioned to administer direct services—and with other revenue sources, such as Alameda County's Measure C and managed care funds—in service to the expansion and evolution of an effective early childhood system.

Administration and Facilities

First 5's Administration and Facilities' strategy is to provide a safe, productive, efficient and inclusive work environment for staff and partners. Administrative and facilities staff ensure that the facility is operating as it should on a daily basis by completing regular inspections, ensuring compliance with all relevant requirements and standards, and conducting repairs and maintenance. Office administrative operations are performed in a seamless manner to ensure the efficient operations of the agency.

GOALS

- Maintain and operate an office facility that provides for a safe, clean, functional, and welcoming environment.
- Perform maintenance and repairs in a minimally disruptive manner.
- Review operational efficiencies to maximize the utilization of resources.
- Ensure that the office facility meets legal requirements and health and safety standards.
- Provide efficient and effective administration procedures and practices.

Finance

PURPOSE

First 5's Finance strategy enables the agency to use Proposition 10 funds strategically for direct service programs, as First 5 transitions away from providing direct services funded by Proposition 10 to a contracted and community-based model.

Finance focuses on budgeting, financial planning, forecasting, and managing revenue and expenditures for programs core to the agency's mission. The Finance department effectively and transparently communicates fiscal data to the First 5 Alameda County Commission to ensure the ongoing health and viability of the organization.

GOALS

- Develop and maintain fiscally responsible and sustainable budgets that reflect our strategies with input from stakeholders and system partners.
- Present timely financial reports to identify current and future revenue and expenditure trends.
- Implement the agency's financial policies and procedures to ensure the timely, accurate, and complete reporting of financial information.
- Ensure that financial operations and transactions are accurate and in compliance with federal, state, and financial requirements.

Human Resources

PURPOSE

To serve First 5's function as a backbone to the early childhood system, Human Resources builds the capacity of the agency and our workforce. First 5's Human Resources strategy focuses on aligning agency structure, staffing, operations, and culture with its organizational focus on systems change work. Human Resources serves as an effective partner by providing efficient and solution-focused services, maintaining a culture of inclusiveness and belonging, and ensuring First 5 has the requisite expertise, competencies, and skills needed to successfully execute the 2022–2027 Strategic Plan. We seek to retain and recruit a diverse workforce that reflects Alameda County, support staff development, ensure regulatory compliance, and support agency planning to inform organizational structure and business processes.

GOALS

- Engage in organizational development to improve the agency's capability through alignment of our mission, strategy, people, structure, and processes.
- Focus our talent acquisition strategies on attracting, developing, and retaining a talented and diverse workforce.
- Expand professional development and create resources dedicated to offering learning opportunities that support our organizational goals while enhancing the knowledge and skills of our workforce and increasing employee engagement, retention, and morale.
- Provide support and guidance to agency equity training and definition processes, incorporating future recommendations into internal practices.
- Cultivate leadership within the agency, including succession planning and staff capacity building. Doing so will help to support the agency and develop leaders for the early childhood field.

Technology

PURPOSE

First 5's Technology strategy focuses on deploying technology applications and tools to support coordination and linkages, communication, and shared accountability among agency staff, partners, and grantees. With equity at the center of service design and delivery, this strategy provides support to staff and partners for operational efficiencies, data collection and tracking, and performance management.

GOALS

- Conduct a technology assessment to create a roadmap for decision-making regarding applications for accounting, Salesforce, case management, resource directory, and website applications.
- Develop a process for selection of technology solutions that foster teaching, learning, research, and operations.
- Plan for the eventual implementation of data systems to prepare for the likely implementation of Measure C, including a child care Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) and enrollment systems, contingent on funding.



PROPOSITION 10 FY 22/23 INVESTMENTS

First 5 is using a Maintenance of Effort approach to this strategic plan for fiscal year 2022–2023 to maintain strategy budgets as we seek to build out the early childhood system. The budget will be updated annually.

Neighborhoods Ready for School (\$3,500,000) is a place-based investment, asset building, and policy response to the relationship and interplay between neighborhood conditions, family, and child well-being and the structural factors that contribute to overall health, development, and kindergarten readiness.

Quality Early Care and Education (\$1,722,500) provides quality improvement supports for centers, family child care (FCC) providers, and family, friend and neighbor (FFN) providers with coaching, training, professional development, technical assistance, and financial incentives and supports; learning networks for each type of child care delivery setting; funds community-based programming for those children who are not in a licensed early educational setting.

Parent Partnership (\$2,080,000) provides direct services to families and children with a focus on maternal and child health and the 0-3 years and uses parent leadership to inform programming and investments.

Early Identification, Screening, and Care Coordination (\$1,365,000) connects and strengthens public system and community resources to engage, assess, and connect children, with a focus on Medi-Cal-enrolled families, to pediatric preventative care, medically-necessary services, and community-based programming and support.

Fatherhood (\$262,500) strengthens collaboration with public systems and community-based organizations, increases the representation and improves the experiences of men and fathers through training, strategic messaging, and the development of high-quality father-centered services.

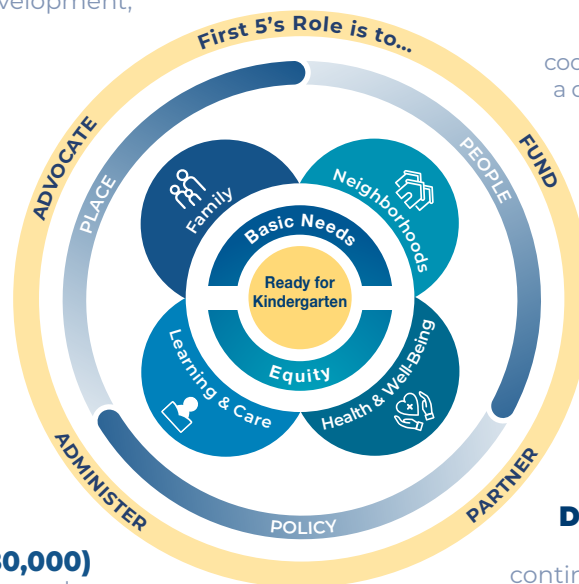
Training (\$700,000) identifies, coordinates, and delivers training to foster a diverse, well-trained provider workforce and support awareness, leadership, and linkages in each of the core components of the early childhood system.

Policy (\$1,146,600) utilizes analysis, data, information, and coalitions to support the evolution of an equity-centered local early childhood system. We engage in advocacy to scale and sustain effective programs and to promote public policies grounded in equity and justice.

Data and Evaluation (\$1,058,400) supports shared accountability, continued organizational learning, public awareness, and policy advocacy as part of our role in evolving the early childhood system.

Communications (\$605,000) works with internal and external audiences to inform and guide key stakeholders and decisionmakers in understanding, building, and supporting an equitable, sustainable, and comprehensive early childhood system.

Operations and Administration (\$3,510,000) includes finance, human resources, technology, facilities, and administration.





MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

To understand, track, and guide our progress we use data, research, and parent and community knowledge. Together, this information helps us understand how well children and families in the county are doing in areas that we know correspond to kindergarten readiness—like access to basic needs, participation in early care and education, and neighborhood conditions.

We also use data to understand the performance, impact, and opportunity for continuous improvement in our programs and investments.

This method of distinguishing “Population” and “Performance” data is part of a framework called Results Based Accountability. It is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action to improve quality of life in communities, as well as to improve the performance of programs.

In our approach we strive to use data for action, and we work within our agency and with partners to make data accessible, relevant, and actionable. Data can shed light on partnership opportunities and guide actions that advance our equity commitment, are driven by community, and are low- or no-cost.

We use evaluation as a tool to help us get “under the hood” to understand why and how investments or programs might be working, and lift promising practices for policy advocacy, sustainability, and scale.

We are committed to participatory, equity-informed, and community-driven practices in our data, research, and evaluation work. At every stage—from identifying research questions and measures, to data collection methods, to interpreting findings and developing recommendations—we seek to be in deep partnership with community stakeholders. In the implementation of this Strategic Plan, we will develop performance measures to understand our progress toward our goals.

Results Based Accountability as a Tool for Equity

Population Result: The well-being of a whole population in a geographic area (e.g., all children under five in Alameda County, or all families with children under five in a zip code)

All Children in Alameda County are Ready for Kindergarten

We look at disaggregated data to understand structural inequities that create disparities in outcomes. This helps to inform our programs and investments.

Performance Accountability: The well-being of client populations for programs, agencies, or service systems (i.e., all children 0-5 on Medi-Cal, all families served by ABC community organization)

For our programs and investments, we ask ourselves:

- *How much do we do?*
- *How well do we do it?*
- *Is anyone better off?*

For more on RBA and Equity, Racial Equity: [Getting to Results](#) (2017)

LOCAL REVENUE FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES CREATE OPPORTUNITY

Significant public investment from recent state and federal government actions, combined with local initiatives, have created an unprecedented opportunity for Alameda County to evolve its local early care and education (ECE) system to better serve children, families, and ECE professionals.

In Alameda County there were two recent countywide ballot measures related to ECE. The first, which was unsuccessful, was county-sponsored Measure A in 2018. The City of Oakland's Measure AA (see sidebar) was run congruently and with intended administrative alignment to Measure A. Upon Measure A's defeat, the community led a signature campaign to place Measure C on the ballot, which was passed by voters in March 2020 and names First 5 as the administrator of the Child Care, Preschool, and Early Education portion of the revenue.

Measure C Allocation

Measure C is a half-percent (0.5%) sales tax that would raise an estimated \$150 million per year to provide support and enhancements for child care, preschool, early education, and pediatric health care in Alameda County. The funds will be divided 80/20 into two subaccounts, a Pediatric Health Care Account (20%), overseen by a citizen oversight committee, and a Child Care, Preschool, and Early Education Account (80%), administered by First 5.

Measure C is expected to impact thousands of children and families across Alameda County who will have improved access to trauma care, specialized pediatric care, and treatment and expanded access to child care. Measure C also includes an increase in ECE workforce wages to \$15 per hour, improvements to ECE quality, and teacher retention.

Currently the implementation of Measure C is delayed due to litigation currently pending in Alameda County Superior Court that challenges Measure C on numerous grounds, including that it required a two-thirds vote, an argument that has already been rejected by several appellate courts.

Oakland's Measure AA: The Children's Initiative of 2018

Measure AA is a parcel tax projected to provide approximately \$30 million annually in funding for early care and education and college preparedness programs in Oakland.

Measure AA was upheld by courts in December 2021.

First 5 is named as a potential administrator in Measure AA

CHILD CARE FUND COMPONENTS

- Increases access to quality care for participating providers through
 - New enrollments
 - Rate enhancements
- Ensures teacher wages at a minimum of \$15 per hour to be increased annually with revenue increases
- Allows services to 0–12-year-olds, but defines a focus on 0–5-year-olds
- Targets low-income families and those children/families with the greatest needs, e.g., families experiencing homelessness and foster children

FIRST 5'S ROLE AS MEASURE C ADMINISTRATOR

First 5 commits to the responsible stewardship of these resources, in partnership with the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and other ECE stakeholders, particularly parents/caregivers and ECE professionals. First 5's role as outlined in section 2.08.305.B of the Ordinance:

- Developing Program Plan & Annual Expenditure Plan
- Allocating funds based on Expenditure Plan
- Developing, implementing, administering, and overseeing all programs and services paid for by the Child Care, Preschool, and Early Education account

- Providing staff support for the CAC
- Developing the Program Plan Evaluation
- Operating with transparency and public accountability, good fiscal stewardship of public resources, annual audit to ensure compliance
- Awarding funds pursuant to our contracting policies and the Ordinance requirements

MEASURE C, FIRST 5, AND ALAMEDA COUNTY'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Measure C will benefit Alameda County's early childhood system of care broadly and will impact First 5 as the county's only governmental agency solely dedicated to families/caregivers with children 0-5 by:

- Aligning new investment with First 5's current investments and providing resources for "backbone" support to the early childhood system
- Allowing First 5 to leverage our subject matter expertise, community partnerships, and infrastructure
- Facilitating integration with First 5 programming and fiscal leveraging of Proposition 10 and Measure C, in addition to federal, state, local, and philanthropic funds
- Shifting First 5's role, budget, operations, scale (i.e., staff and contracts), and community and public partnerships

PRE-PLANNING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEM READINESS

- First 5 has not initiated the Program Plan, which must be developed in coordination with the CAC (still to be seated) and community, for approval by the First 5 Alameda County Commission and Board of Supervisors.
- To ready the agency and shore up the early childhood system in anticipation of Measure C, First 5 has begun pre-planning, with community and partners, in the areas of:
 - Supporting and advancing **quality supports** for ECE providers, including family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers, in meeting their identified quality goals
 - Investing in an **ECE Facilities Needs Assessment** for centers and family child care providers to understand the infrastructure and space needed to offer high quality care
 - Assessing and planning for **technology and data systems** that promote and monitor the effectiveness of local strategies, including the mandated **evaluation**; integrating information on subsidies; support quality and the ECE workforce; providing for a local centralized child care subsidy eligibility list; and expanding opportunities for parent, family, provider, and community engagement
 - Partnering with the field to develop **workforce strategies** to attract, train, retain, and promote ECE professionals

Current Landscape of ECE in Alameda County

ACCESS: Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECE system suffered from low supply and high cost. The shortage of licensed child care is particularly acute in infant and toddler settings, with capacity for **fewer than one out of every ten infants and toddlers in the county.**³⁹

AFFORDABILITY: In Alameda County, the average cost of child care is more than 40% of the average family's income.⁴⁰ With most income-eligible families unable to access subsidies that would mitigate the cost of care, **any available care is unaffordable.**

UNDER-RESOURCED PROVIDERS: Systemic and historical disinvestment in the ECE system has harmed child care providers, a population comprised primarily of women of color who possess years of experience, education, and expertise, yet are poorly compensated. **Eighty-seven percent of the ECE workforce is considered very low-income for Alameda County.**¹³ Forty percent of the ECE workforce are aged 50 or older, and attrition was a challenge in the ECE field even prior to the COVID-19 crisis.¹³

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Early Care and Education

Alameda County's ECE system, like many across the country, was on perilous footing before the COVID-19 pandemic began. We estimate that the Alameda County ECE field lost \$395 million in fiscal year 2020–2021 alone and continues to experience losses in the current fiscal year.²² Two years into the pandemic, the ECE system, infrastructure, and workforce remains under-resourced. ECE providers face significant challenges to providing quality, equitable access and affordable care.

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