

AGENDA

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AND THE BUDGET & FINANCE AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

Budget & Finance Committee Chair: Robert Byrd

Thursday, January 28, 2016
1:30 PM

Meeting Location:

First 5 LA
750 N. Alameda Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012



ASPOSE

Your File Format APIs

1. **ACTION**
Call to Order / Roll Call
- **Duane Dennis, Chair**
2. **INFORMATION** **3**
Review Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners / Program & Planning Committee
Notes – November 19, 2015
- **Duane Dennis, Chair**
3. **INFORMATION** **155**
Best Start Communities Building Stronger Families (BSFF) Implementation Plan Final Report
- **Antoinette Andrews, Assistant Director of Planning and Implementation, Best Start Communities**
- **Alfredo Lee, Program Officer, Best Start Communities**
4. **INFORMATION** **232**
Early Care and Education (ECE) Policy and Advocacy Fund
- **Peter Barth, Director, Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs**
5. Break
6. **INFORMATION** **248**
Strategic Communications: Using Strategic Communications to Advance First 5 LA

COMMISSIONERS

Los Angeles County Supervisor	Judy Abdo	Summer McBride
Holly J. Mitchell <i>Chair</i>	Robert Byrd, Psy.D.	Maricela Ramirez
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John A. Wagner

A PUBLIC ENTITY

- Program and Policy Goals
- **Gabriel Sanchez, Director, Communications and Marketing**
7. **INFORMATION** 264
Strategic Plan Implementation Update: Project Dulce Strategic
- **Mabel Munoz, Senior Program Officer, Program Development**
8. **INFORMATION**
Public Comment
9. **ACTION**
Adjournment



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MEETING OF FIRST 5 LOS ANGELES PROGRAM AND PLANNING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2015
750 NORTH ALAMEDA STREET, FIRST FLOOR
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

REPORTED BY:
HEATHERLYNN GONZALEZ
CSR #13646

1 THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2015; LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

2 1:48 p.m.

3 -oOo-

4 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Good afternoon, everyone.
5 Good afternoon.

6 First of all, I have to apologize for the delay.
7 Commissioners were in the back playing games; so we
8 couldn't get out here.

9 Okay. First of all, we are going to start with
10 introductions. And then after the introductions, we'll
11 get into the business of P and P. Remember, this is a
12 special session of the commission and so, as such, we will
13 be taking action today, which is uncommon for a regular
14 P and P meeting. So this is like another board meeting.
15 So I just wanted to make sure everyone understood that and
16 don't be surprised when the commission takes action on
17 several issues today.

18 If there is anyone in the audience who would like
19 to make comments on any of the items, I hope you've signed
20 your slip and given it to Linda; if not, you can do that
21 now.

22 And I'm Duane Dennis. I'm serving as your chair.
23 Hopefully, this is my last meeting of this year. There
24 could be another meeting next month. We'll see.

25 COMMISSIONER BOSTWICK: Suzanne Bostwick,

1 alternate commissioner and Department of Public Health.

2 COMMISSIONER CURRY: Trish Curry, commissioner.

3 COMMISSIONER BOECKMANN: Jane Boeckmann,
4 commissioner.

5 COMMISSIONER AU: Nancy Au, commissioner.

6 COMMISSIONER ABDO: Judy Abdo, commissioner.

7 MS. FAED: Pegah Faed, research and evaluation.

8 MS. JOHN: Reena John, senior program officer,
9 First 5 LA.

10 MS. NUNO: Teresa Nuno, chief of programs and
11 planning, First 5 LA.

12 MR. WAGNER: John Wagner, chief operating
13 officer, First 5 LA.

14 MS. ANDREWS: Antoinette Andrews, assistant
15 director, Best Start community.

16 COMMISSIONER YBARRA: Joseph Ybarra,
17 commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON: Christopher Thompson,
19 commissioner, DMH.

20 COMMISSIONER PLEITEZ HOWELL: Karla Pleitez
21 Howell, commissioner.

22 MS. BELSHE: Kim Belshe, First 5.

23 MS. PIPPARD: Jennifer Pippard, community
24 development.

25 MS. DUBRANSKI: Barbara Dubranski, program

1 development.

2 MS. COLMAN: Debra Colman, program development.

3 MS. FALLIN: Katie Fallin, research and

4 evaluation.

5 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) with the Child Care

6 Alliance of Los Angeles.

7 MR. ORTEGA: Raul Ortega, government policy.

8 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: You still work here, guy?

9 MR. SANCHEZ: Gabriel Sanchez, director of
10 department of marketing, First 5 LA.

11 MR. DIETERLE: Kevin Dieterle, program officer
12 and program development.

13 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) Program officer, Best
14 Start.

15 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) Ramirez, Best Start
16 communities,

17 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) program officer, Best
18 Start Communities.

19 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) Best Start
20 communities.

21 Mr. ESPINOZA: Marvin Espinoza, senior program
22 officer, Best Start communities.

23 Ms. ELLIS: Marcia Ellis, assistant director,
24 Best Start Communities.

25 MR. DeLEON: Ruben DeLeon, Best Start

1 communities.

2 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible.)

3 SPEAKER: Nina Corman.

4 RAFAEL GONZALEZ: Rafael Gonzalez, Best Start
5 Communities, First 5 LA.

6 MR. JIMENEZ: Armando Jimenez, research and
7 evaluation, First 5 LA.

8 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: It's nice that Best Start
9 is in the house today.

10 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) program officer, Best
11 Start.

12 SPEAKER: Good afternoon. (Unintelligible)
13 program officer, Best Start Communities, First 5 LA.

14 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) Best Start
15 communities.

16 SPEAKER: John (Unintelligible) Best Start
17 communities.

18 SPEAKER: Ann (Unintelligible) Best Start
19 communities.

20 MR. PEREZ: Alex Perez, (Unintelligible) agency.

21 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) Best Start
22 communities, here with First 5.

23 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) Contracts advice,
24 contracts officer.

25 SPEAKER: (Unintelligible) Officer at First 5 LA.

1 MS. MORALES: April Morales, (unintelligible)
2 officer, First 5 LA.

3 SPEAKER: Nancy (unintelligible), Providence
4 Little Company of Mary.

5 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Say that again.

6 SPEAKER: Nancy (unintelligible), Providence
7 Little Company of Mary.

8 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: I knew you didn't work for
9 Best Start, and I had to hear you.

10 SPEAKER: We want the Best Start grant.

11 SPEAKER: -- director of progress.

12 MS. AYALA: Celia Ayala, LAUP and part of Best
13 Start.

14 MS. NIGRELLI: Christina Nigrelli, Zero to Three.

15 Ms. LAMB: Terry Lamb, LAUP.

16 MS. WORBEL: Lee Worbel, senior program officer,
17 First 5 LA.

18 MS. FICEK: Tara Ficek, director of grants
19 management, First 5 LA.

20 MS. CHANG: Annie Chang, policy and
21 intergovernmental affairs, First 5 LA.

22 MS. SHRINER: Kathy Shriner, guidance buddy,
23 Better Start Panorama City of Neighbors.

24 MS. PETERSON: Devin Peterson, research and
25 evaluation, First 5 LA.

1 MS. LEE: Hi. Stacy Lee, director office of
2 strategic planning and integration, First 5 LA.

3 MS. PIPPARD: Jennifer Pippard, contracts and
4 compliance, First 5 LA.

5 MR. BUSTILLO: Roberto Bustillo, community
6 organizing director with InnerCity Struggle in East LA.

7 MS. HERNANDEZ: Hi, Vaci Hernandez with {
8 project.

9 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Okay. Ladies.

10 SPEAKER: Karen (unintelligible), First 5 LA.

11 SECRETARY: Linda Vo, First 5 LA.

12 STENOGRAPHER: Heatherlynn Gonzalez,
13 stenographer.

14 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: I think everybody is here
15 and accounted for. We'll go on to John. He'll talk about
16 the consent calendar.

17 MR. WAGNER: Good afternoon, everyone. We do
18 have a couple of items on consent that I'd like to
19 highlight and provide some critical context on given the
20 importance of these contracts and the work behind them
21 following up on our own Stacy Lee's presentation at the
22 last week's board meeting. I think some of the work in
23 these contracts really represent really critical work
24 under our new strategic plan and a new way that we're
25 working here at First 5 LA.

1 The two items that I'll talk about are project
2 impact and also the Best Start community capacity building
3 contracts. So first to start with First 5 California
4 Initiative. The first item on consent, which is 2A, Would
5 direct staff to submit an application for a new state
6 funding opportunity related to the development of quality
7 rating and improvement system, or QRIS. First 5
8 California is funding new initiative which is entitled,
9 The Improved and Maximized Programs So All Children
10 Thrive, or IMPACT initiative.

11 As you know at our last board meeting just a week
12 ago, the board approved the LAUP expenditure plan and the
13 estimated amount of the LAUP expenditure plan at this
14 point is 45 to \$50 million of the fund balance. And the
15 board's prior approval of the expenditure plan allows us
16 with LAUP to spend approximately 80 percent of that amount
17 on QRIS-related activities, ten percent on policy and
18 advocacy, and the remaining ten percent on workforce
19 development. In addition, the board also approved staff
20 use a portion of the LAUP fund balance dedicated to QRIS
21 to meet the match requirement for First 5 California's
22 IMPACT funding.

23 So the item before you today, consistent with the
24 prior board action, really authorizes staff and directs
25 staff to complete and submit this application which is due

1 to the State on December 11th. State will -- staff will
2 come back and update the board early in the spring as far
3 as what is new with the impact initiative and our work in
4 this area.

5 Now, moving on to the second item on consent,
6 which involves the Best Start community capacity building
7 contracts, we have eight contracts for your consideration
8 and hopefully approval. And this represents the
9 investments we've been making in eight of our Best Start
10 communities, which is really exciting work, work that
11 we've talked about here several -- many presentations, and
12 is identified as a community capacity building work in
13 these communities. From previous presentations, you'll
14 recall this important work was included in this year's
15 budget. We had referred to this in the budget as the
16 results-focused action or learning by doing activities.
17 So this is all part of the funding stream that the board
18 approved in the budget last June.

19 The eight contracts on consent follow up on the
20 board's approval of three contracts earlier this year. We
21 first had Central Long Beach back in February approved by
22 the board, Metro LA was approved in July, and Panorama
23 City and Neighbors in September.

24 So as was the case with those earlier contracts,
25 Best -- Best Start staff have been working extremely

1 closely with these communities and with the various
2 community partnerships to work -- to select work
3 identified by each of these communities. And upon board
4 approval, staff will finalize these contracts executing
5 our community capacity building work in 11 of our 14 Best
6 Start communities. The other three communities are still
7 in the procurement process.

8 And acknowledging that this is really exciting
9 and important work going on in the communities, we did
10 want to provide a little bit more detail, and Antoinette
11 Andrews will provide a walk-through for the board of those
12 eight contracts and the work in them.

13 MS. ANDREWS: Good afternoon, commissioners. I
14 first want to take the opportunity to express our
15 gratitude for this specially meeting of the board of
16 commissioners and for our executive leadership as well to
17 approve contracts for the eight Best Start communities
18 today. This is a standing affirmation of the commitment
19 that First 5 LA has made to the 14 Best Start communities
20 and is really about building community capacity to
21 strengthen families.

22 So the projects before you today represent the
23 next phase of our community capacity building approach.
24 The first phase emphasized the importance of relationship
25 building among parents, organizations, and other key

1 stakeholders to develop a shared vision for children and
2 families and to work collectively to identify effective
3 strategies to realize that vision.

4 The second phase represented by the community
5 identified projects before you today signals the
6 application of all the discussions, the theories, all the
7 acronyms, all the community discussions, and our learnings
8 about what it really takes to build community capacity to
9 strengthen families.

10 So the projects before you today combined
11 represent shared leadership between parents and
12 organizations. They seek so strengthen the social fabric
13 of communities by building really important relationships
14 within communities. They seek to promote greater civic
15 engagement and civic involvement of parents in particular
16 into the civic life of their communities. They represent
17 opportunities to build awareness about and connect
18 families to needed services and supports while also
19 emphasizing the importance of parent engagement in ongoing
20 quality improvement of these services. And, finally they
21 are platforms. This is an opportunity to spread all of
22 the knowledge and the wisdom and the experiences and the
23 vision and the energy that has been experienced by our
24 community partnerships with the larger community.

25 So as Commissioner Dennis noted at our October

1 board meeting, these projects are currently two years in
2 duration. And our next steps are to re-examine the timing
3 based on the following considerations: The results that
4 we seek through these projects, the reality of a ramp-up
5 time and early implementation, and refinements to our
6 overall funding approach.

7 As John noted, with today's approval, 11 of the
8 14 communities will be funded to implement their projects.
9 These three additional communities will be brought to the
10 board in January or February of 2016. The solicitations
11 for Lancaster and West Athens have been re-released due to
12 a lack of applicants with the capacity and experience
13 required to implement the projects. And the re-release
14 allows us to do more in-depth engagement of organizations
15 of who would be qualified to do this really important
16 work.

17 And with regards to Northeast Valley, the RFP
18 process has been completed; however, we are still in the
19 procurement process. Los Angeles Universal Preschool,
20 LAUP, has been selected as the grantee; however, contract
21 negotiations are pending based on critical ongoing
22 discussions with the Northeast Valley community to
23 determine its future and to advance this work.

24 As has been noted, there are many Best Start
25 staff and Best Start friends, meaning we have a lot of

1 staff from other departments who are here to support this
2 work, and they have been intimately involved as well in
3 helping to get to this point. We also have LAUP,
4 InnerCity Struggle, and Providence Little Company of Mary,
5 who are the grantees that will be moving forward with
6 these projects among the others with your approval today.

7 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Thank you, Antoinette.

8 Any questions or comments to Antoinette and the
9 Best Start staff since we have so many here? I think it
10 would be nice, commission, to say something. You know,
11 they took that bus ride to get up here.

12 COMMISSIONER BOSTWICK: Just real quickly.

13 Antoinette, thank you so much. This is great to be able
14 to see this and having it all spelled out here.

15 In taking a look at the scope of work for each of
16 the new contractors, it was just amazing as I went
17 through, as far as social support and for aligning
18 resources. It's like boom, boom, boom. That's exactly
19 what all these agencies are doing.

20 And these are very strong agencies. I'm familiar
21 with quite a few of them, and I think it's great that
22 they're selected to do this because I think this
23 particular work, especially the support and always
24 aligning resources is so critical out there, that that's
25 really activities that are very important to the

1 communities. So thank you so much.

2 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Anybody else?

3 COMMISSIONER PLEITEZ HOWELL: Antoinette, thank
4 you so much for bringing this to our attention. I have
5 two questions. One is around community information
6 sharing about how they will find out or if they already
7 know about some of these -- well, they probably know a
8 little bit, but how people share that information. And
9 then strategically, how will we connect these
10 organizations to follow up and share best practice
11 challenges amongst each other. Has that been thought
12 through?

13 MS. ANDREWS: Yes. Absolutely. To answer your
14 -- the first question, commissioners may recall that
15 community members were a part of the selection process for
16 the organizations. And our program officers have shared
17 with the community partnerships who have -- the
18 organizations that have been selected. In some cases, the
19 organizations were intimately involved and are part of the
20 community partnership, so parents are very much aware of
21 them. In other cases, organizations have begun to
22 introduce them ourselves. And, of course, everyone
23 understands that it's pending board approval that they
24 would move forward with the work. But that relationship
25 building that is so critical and was a part of the first

1 phase of this work needs to continue in order to set a
2 solid foundation.

3 To answer your second question, we have thought
4 about how to bring the grantees together to share
5 learning, particularly since the strategies and activities
6 are common across communities. So although there are
7 different community contexts, the issues are the same.
8 And so we can all benefit from the learning of these
9 organizations. So our thought at this time is that we
10 would start with an orientation of all grantees in January
11 and that there would be ongoing times where we would bring
12 them together periodically to share lessons learned and
13 tools and those kinds of things so that we can really
14 build not only the capacity of each individual Best Start
15 community, but all 14.

16 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Trish.

17 COMMISSIONER CURRY: Again, thank you. This is
18 really nicely done. What John and I have been involved in
19 the last several months in the office of child protection
20 prevention initiative, discussing how to do it. And in
21 that, we keep referring to part of the work that's already
22 been being done in prevention is by Best Starts and how,
23 you know, First 5 can take a leadership role. And these
24 are exactly -- the kinds of things in these contracts are
25 the exactly the things that we've been really -- when we

1 say Best Start, these are the prevention things.

2 And so I just want to make sure that we're all
3 thinking along the same lines, is how do we get this
4 information, John, involved with the prevention initiative
5 and how do we really utilize it as prevention practice?

6 MR. WAGNER: Yeah, I think that's an example of
7 the importance of connecting this work. And one of the
8 things, as you know, commissioner, we've been requested to
9 do is, as we're working with the Office of Child
10 Protection, to come up with an inventory or a list of some
11 of these community assets and infrastructure that
12 different groups have invested in. We will include
13 information from our Best Start communities into the list.
14 And we've already have been providing that information.
15 Welcome Baby is another example and PCIT.

16 So we will continue to work with the Office of
17 Child Protection to make sure we're providing that
18 information as we engage communities about prevention.

19 COMMISSIONER CURRY: And I guess at some point,
20 as we continue doing that, we probably need to report back
21 to everybody here what's going on at the Office of Child
22 Protection and, you know, what it is we're working on. I
23 I'm not sure that we're there yet.

24 MR. WAGNER: Right.

25 COMMISSIONER CURRY: But at some point in time,

1 we should.

2 MR. WAGNER: Sure. Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Okay. Thank you, Trish.
4 Nancy then Judy.

5 COMMISSIONER AU: I think this is a major
6 milestone after all these years, and then we're finally
7 see the fruition of Best Start. But then -- again, we
8 have to also be very clear that this is still the initial
9 steps. There's so much more to be done. So the
10 fundamental question I ask is that we, being clear as
11 commissioners, that this is still just first steps; that
12 the goal of Best Start is still having to do with the big
13 community capacity building, which means right now we're
14 probably just making an inroad and that we're establishing
15 the initial infrastructure for the -- if you want to call
16 it a movement, to grow. And the movement is to be able to
17 welcome other partners in this community conversation
18 about how best to be the kind of community that supports
19 the -- the optimum growth of children zero to five and
20 their families.

21 So I think I -- I'm going to really be cognizant
22 of the need for some level of flexibility because one of
23 the things -- the danger of having to abide in the -- sort
24 of the traditional model of grant making and grant or
25 program accountability and all of the -- those what

1 sometimes are referred to as bean counting processes, that
2 there is a danger of getting lost the whole big vision of
3 Best Start.

4 So I -- I just want to caution that this is a
5 baby step. We're just making our first step into it, but
6 then we also need to be open and flexible in including
7 more so that the tables for Best Start becomes bigger and
8 that we have more of that community engagement.

9 So anyway, thank you. Congratulations.

10 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Judy.

11 COMMISSIONER ABDO: Well, I see this as a step
12 towards a culture change in our county. And I know that
13 that's kind of leaping ahead, but, to me, that's why we're
14 all doing this work, is we want everyone in the county to
15 understand the importance of the work that is being done
16 from birth to five, and that this is a step in many places
17 that will make a culture difference in those places. But
18 I think the even more exciting opportunity is for the --
19 the Best Start communities to interact with each other and
20 form sort of a 14-member culture change group and hope
21 that it will then go beyond these -- these 14 places.

22 I happen to represent a district that has only
23 one of these 14. And there are lots and lots of people in
24 the district -- in Sheila Kuehl's district that will
25 benefit from the work that's being done here. And I hope

1 there will be a way for these changes that are happening,
2 culture changes, to spread to the whole county. Thank
3 you.

4 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Karla.

5 COMMISSIONER PLEITEZ HOWELL: Sorry. Delayed
6 brain cell synapse reaction.

7 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: You don't have to apologize
8 for being delayed.

9 COMMISSIONER PLEITEZ HOWELL: Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Go on.

11 COMMISSIONER PLEITEZ HOWELL: The one question
12 that arises is that, after five and seven years of
13 analyzing and looking at this work, First 5 has a lot of
14 really rich information about all these communities. the
15 grantees do not have that information, and I'm wondering
16 how we'll share all that rich information so that we don't
17 ask the communities the same questions over and over
18 again. Is there a plan for that?

19 MS. ANDREWS: It's interesting that you would ask
20 that question because we actually have been talking
21 internally about how we utilize the information from the
22 last several years to inform our work moving forward so
23 that we don't do the same thing. And what you are -- are
24 asking is reminding us that this is in fact something that
25 needs to be on our radar at the community level as well.

1 So as we plan for the orientations and the ongoing
2 learning and engagement between grantees and between the
3 grantees and the communities, we need to see ourselves as
4 a resource in helping to move this work forward.

5 So we will definitely make a note of that and
6 ensure that we are doing that moving forward.

7 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Anybody else?

8 I'll have one question, Antoinette. I've been a
9 part of the Best Start process for the last seven years
10 and have seen the development over time. And through that
11 development, you know, we directed and we tooled probably
12 about a year and a half ago. And seven years ago we had
13 program officers who were dealing in those communities and
14 now we are at a different point. And -- and one of the
15 skills now that we need of our program officers versus
16 what we needed seven years ago and when we hire a new
17 program officer, because these are like you know, our
18 boots in the field, the folks who are, you know,
19 connecting directly with the community. When we're
20 hiring, what we're looking for versus what we looked for,
21 you know, seven years ago. And what type of training and
22 development are we doing with current staff so they can
23 meet the new demands of, you know, our place-based
24 initiative.

25 MS. ANDREWS: Excellent question. Seven years

1 ago, we were embarking upon this very important investment
2 and we knew that, at the core, parents needed to be
3 engaged in ways that we had not done. And so our staff
4 had been, during the first phase of Best Start, really
5 working to ensure that parents have a voice and that they
6 have influence in terms of how things would move forward.

7 Now that we're at this point in time, those --
8 the skill sets required for that period of time are still
9 needed so that the parent voice doesn't go away and
10 parents aren't taking a backseat to now grantees
11 organizations who want to move this work forward, but it
12 really is about ensuring the organizations are
13 authentically engaging the parents in implementing these
14 projects and others as we expand and spread the influence
15 of Best Start.

16 That said, what we also need now are program
17 officers that have the skill sets to make the connections
18 that Commissioner Curry is referring to, looking at the
19 Office of Child Protection and what's happening there,
20 understanding what our work is around trauma-informed care
21 which we're going to hear about shortly, the work that
22 we're doing in early care and education and being able to
23 connect those dots at a systems level and to be able to
24 look at the work that's happening within Best Start
25 communities and inform larger policy and systems change,

1 which is the direction that we're going in as First 5.

2 So we are in the process, now that we can kind of
3 take a deep breath, that we have the projects before you
4 for approval looking at -- and we've been having these
5 conversations internally for quite some time about what is
6 actually needed in order to insure that this work moves
7 forward, but also that it is sustained beyond us. As
8 we're constantly reminded, we are not the agents of
9 sustainability or scale. And so we have to have the skill
10 sets internally to insure that we're not doing a
11 disservice to communities by putting all these resources
12 in and not doing the work to help sustain it moving
13 forward, meaning developing the partnerships,
14 understanding what the connections are, looking at the
15 current assets within communities, and building upon those
16 assets.

17 So those are some of the skills that we're
18 looking for in our program officers. And the current
19 program officers have begun to do this work as they have
20 shifted out of the day-to-day maintenance of the community
21 partnership and really taking a look at the Best Start
22 community at large and how to pool these various resources
23 together to support the work of the partnership. We are
24 still in conversation about what it looks like moving
25 forward and we're committed to ensuring that our program

1 officers have the skills. And I know as an agency, we're
2 committed to ensuring that our staff has the skills that
3 are necessary in order to promote positive systems change
4 in the long run.

5 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Obviously, this is a major
6 change from where Best Start started and where we are now
7 and what's going to be needed. Obviously, we'll require
8 program officers to have a systems understanding of those
9 things in the community and the connection to county
10 agencies and other partners and how that can be helpful in
11 their respective communities.

12 And I really like what Judy said with regards to
13 the coordination of best practices among the 14
14 communities. I think that's an essential piece. I mean,
15 if we could in some way be catalytic towards that type of
16 forum on a periodical basis, I think that would be
17 helpful. I would love to come to something like that.

18 MS. ANDREWS: In fact, we have one tomorrow.

19 COMMISSIONER AU: Duane, you walked right into
20 that.

21 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Thank you, Antoinette. You
22 weren't supposed to be up --

23 MS. ANDREWS: Because, you know, exactly what you
24 were saying, Commissioner Abdo. We recognized the need to
25 bring the Best Start communities together. And so about a

1 year ago, we started learning community. And so once a
2 quarter, all 14 communities come together. We have about
3 five or six representatives per community. They come
4 together to share what they're doing in their communities.
5 And now they're moving to what's working, some best
6 practices so that they're able to help other communities
7 with -- so we are having one tomorrow, but there will be
8 other opportunities.

9 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Thank you, Antoinette.

10 MS. BELSHE: It's a good example of 2016
11 opportunities, both these quarterly meetings, but like I'm
12 already scheduling to go out and meet with all the
13 partnerships that are moving forward with community
14 identified projects. So we would welcome the chance to
15 include commissioners. We have Brown Act requirements and
16 things like that, but you'll be hearing from us.

17 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: That's great. Any other
18 question or comments?

19 Nancy.

20 COMMISSIONER AU: Yes, one more. Although I
21 caution about sort of this administrative bean counting
22 sort of thing, but I think it's still very critical that
23 we begin to document not only learning in terms of
24 process, but in terms of core requirements. And, again,
25 my vision is that we become the source of being able to

1 articulate to the communities at large, these are the
2 essential components of what constitute a Best Start
3 community. So then that -- that is a basis also for
4 replication for even those outside of our immediate area
5 of LA county. Because, if we can begin to publish in a
6 document that these are the things we've found that were
7 critical in what constituted a healthy community that
8 supported children and families in the most optimal manner
9 possible, I think that would be tremendous. And I think
10 we'd have the basis to do that. Anyway.

11 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Anybody else?

12 COMMISSIONER ABDO: I had just one thing to add
13 to that.

14 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Yes, Judy.

15 COMMISSIONER ABDO: And that that be available in
16 the newer kinds of communications that we see in apps, on
17 websites and social media, not just in a book.

18 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Anybody else? One, two,
19 three? Nobody else.

20 Back to you, John.

21 MR. WAGNER: Okay. So we respectfully request
22 your approval of these contracts.

23 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Motion to approve the
24 consent calendar.

25 COMMISSIONER AU: So moved.

1 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Second?

2 COMMISSIONER YBARRA: Second.

3 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: All in favor?

4 COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

5 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Any abstentions? Any
6 negative. There you go.

7 Great work, guys. Some of you have been around a
8 long time and I appreciate that you're still here.

9 MS. BELSHE: So do I.

10 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: But since you're still
11 here, you know, good. And we'll move on and I think move
12 a way that can be most helpful to the communities you
13 serve and more importantly the people that need it the
14 most. So thank you very much.

15 All right. Let's continue. I think we go into
16 our transcripts from the last meeting. Are there any
17 additions or deletions from our transcripts? For those of
18 you who don't know what transcripts are, they're the
19 notes. So any comments about our notes? Not hearing
20 none, we'll move forward.

21 And next we have who? Reena and Pegah. All
22 right. Program development. Start on.

23 MS. JOHN: So good afternoon, commissioners.
24 Once again, my name is Reena John. I'm a senior program
25 officer in our program development department. I'm also a

1 lead for our health related systems outcome area. And I'm
2 joined by my colleague, Pegah Faed, research analyst in
3 our research and evaluation department, and also the lead
4 on the trauma-informed care strategies.

5 So as you may recall, we had a presentation to
6 the board in September on trauma-informed care where we
7 had a panel of three presenters, two of which were
8 representing statewide working groups on trauma-informed
9 care: One from the Center For Youth Wellness and the
10 second from the State Department of Justice defending
11 childhood initiative. Also on that panel was Mary Lou
12 Fulton from the California Endowment who spoke a little
13 bit about her -- what were their efforts supporting
14 trauma-informed care in school settings. So while we had
15 a chance to sort of share with you some external efforts
16 at that meeting, we really wanted to speak more about our
17 -- our year-one plans here at First 5 LA today.

18 So with that -- before we get started, I actually
19 want to start with a couple of acknowledgments. We wanted
20 to note that, at the end of October, staff had the
21 opportunity to screen a documentary called Paper Tigers
22 here at First 5 LA. And in addition to over 80 staff
23 attending that screening, we also had a number of our
24 commissioners there, Commission Tilton, Bostwick, Shabaz,
25 as well as Marv Southard's representative, Gary Leklitner.

1 Also, one other very important acknowledgment is
2 that, while Pegah and I are up here representing our team,
3 there are a number of folks here in the audience and in
4 the building who really support this TI care work. And
5 those are Tina Chinacarn, Latecia Sanchez, Nia Forman,
6 Devin Peterson, Vaviola Montielle, Ruel Nolloedo, Marvin
7 Espinoza, and Bill Gould. So a big list of folks
8 supporting this work.

9 So for purposes of today's presentation, we are
10 going to -- I will just very briefly review the strategic
11 plan health related systems outcome area. And then I'll
12 hand it over to Pegah to talk a little bit about -- more
13 about the trauma-informed care approach as well as our
14 strategy implementation to date including initial lessons
15 and some of our partnership building and engagement.

16 So this slide looks -- probably looks very
17 familiar to you. It's our four outcome areas: Families,
18 communities, early care and education, and then that
19 fourth box in the lower right-hand corner is our
20 health-related systems outcome area. The outcome we seek
21 for health is to improve how health-related systems such
22 as health, mental health, and substance abuse services
23 coordinate and deliver care to young children and their
24 families. While the outcome areas here are depicted in
25 four distinct boxes, we did want to highlight the strong

1 potential alignments from health, particularly the
2 trauma-informed care strategy, to the other outcome areas.

3 We know that, while First 5 LA is coming to this
4 TI care field through our health-related systems, we know
5 that a lot of momentum is actually in the education
6 sector, particularly in school settings where children
7 spend a lot of their days. What that means for First 5 LA
8 is that this is an approach that we can potentially use in
9 Head Starts, early Head Starts, and preschool settings.
10 So we wanted to call out that connection.

11 Also, another connection is to our communities
12 outcome area work which we just heard about. With that,
13 we know our Best Start staff are working very closely with
14 our Department of Mental Health colleagues in the Health
15 Neighborhoods effort. So we really wanted to call out
16 that that effort very much embeds strong principles of
17 trauma-informed care in concept and in their plan. So
18 we'll continue to track that effort as it applies to our
19 work moving forward.

20 And, finally, one of the strongest connections we
21 see right now is the connection between our
22 trauma-informed care work and our families outcomes area,
23 specifically our home visitation efforts. We know from
24 working with our family strengthening team and talking to
25 our county counterparts that, while our select home

1 visitation contractors may not be calling out TI care as a
2 practice that they're utilizing, they are utilizing those
3 practices and those policies in their work. And so we
4 just want to call out that very strong connection that,
5 you know, we see at staff and we'll be working very
6 closely to continue to track and make those connections.
7 Pegah will follow up a little more in her portion of the
8 presentation on that connection.

9 So with that, this next slide is just a reminder
10 for commissioners, again, on some guiding principles
11 related to our health-related systems work. The principle
12 we wanted to call out most is to highlight the slide in
13 sort of that first arrow on partnerships. This is
14 particularly sort of significant for our trauma-informed
15 care work because it's very sort of fundamental
16 foundational to the work -- to the way that we're sort of
17 starting our work. So we wanted to really call this out.

18 Already we've identified three philanthropic
19 partners, all of whom have a vested interest in the field
20 of trauma-informed care. We anticipate working with these
21 partners initially to jointly host an exploratory session
22 with a broad spectrum of key stakeholders in the field.
23 While bringing these philanthropic partners together was
24 somewhat opportunistic in, you know, timing and interest
25 played a strong -- sort of strong factors. What we see as

1 sort of the long-term vision is that, once needs are
2 identified, each of these funders may be able to fund
3 different aspects of the work as they see fit.

4 With this, I just wanted to close with a comment
5 from two of our county partners -- actually, commissioners
6 whom we recently had conversations with. And they said
7 this is two very separate conversations, but they
8 basically made the same point, and that is the concept --
9 they both made the observation that the concept of being
10 trauma informed in its broadest definition is one that is
11 held as a core value by most county agencies. When we
12 refer to the system and talk about there being that sort
13 of no wrong door, we also mean in that spirit that every
14 door can and should be trauma informed.

15 In that sense, it's a very universal concept held
16 by many county agencies, and it also I think really
17 summarizes the staff team's approach to this strategy at
18 this point in our implementation.

19 So with that, I'm going to hand it over to Pegah
20 to discuss some of our current plans.

21 MS. FAED: Thank you, Reena. Good afternoon,
22 commissioners.

23 I wanted to briefly touch on why this work is so
24 critical. I know Reena touched on it a bit, but we know
25 that the long-term negative implications of trauma and

1 toxic stress on a child's development and we also know how
2 important a positive and secure attachment with at least
3 one caring adult can be in buffering that negative impact.
4 We also know that this nurturing relationship can be
5 strengthened through the promotion of the protective
6 factors in the systems with which families interact.

7 However, navigating these systems has proven
8 difficult and complex for many families due to the lack of
9 trauma-informed coordinated systems and services. And
10 breaking down those barriers is critical in helping to
11 identify factors that affect socio-emotional and health
12 outcomes for children and their families.

13 There's a critical need for First 5 LA to work on
14 systems change approaches related to trauma-informed care
15 as it is an issue that really touches all of our work in
16 different outcome areas and has a profound impact on
17 children, families, and their communities.

18 So I just wanted to start out by sharing our
19 projected five-year goals for our TI care systems change
20 work. We call out goals around partnership building,
21 service delivery, system improvement, and policy and
22 advocacy. The take away I just wanted to highlight from
23 this slide is that much of our five-year goals will be
24 determined through the partnership building work which
25 we've already started and I'll speak to more in a moment.

1 Because we're bringing together partners to the
2 table and really using a collective impact approach to
3 this work to develop a common agenda and action plan for
4 LA county, much of our goals will be shaped by an evolving
5 to what the collective identifies as critical work to move
6 forward in LA county.

7 So this figure here is a visual depiction of our
8 year-one implementation plans for our TI care systems
9 change work. The large arrow on top lays out more of our
10 concrete activities for year one around planning convening
11 the exploratory session that Reena referred to in
12 partnership with three of the philanthropic partners that
13 have signed on to co-convene with the First 5 LA. And
14 those are the California Endowment, the California
15 Community Foundation, and the Parsons Foundation.

16 First 5 LA staff has been meeting with these
17 partners of these three foundations to help plan this
18 exploratory session. The session will convene a
19 countywide meeting with a group of key partners, which
20 include county system representatives potential
21 co-funders, and other identified stakeholders in the field
22 of TI care. The purpose of this exploratory session will
23 be to come together and create a safe space for various
24 stakeholders to discuss and develop a common understanding
25 of the following: What is trauma-informed care? What

1 efforts are being implemented in the state and county
2 around this work? Who's interested in trauma-informed
3 care and in what capacity and sector? And what next steps
4 can be taken as a group or body to move forward a common
5 agenda on TI care in LA county?

6 We anticipate this exploratory session will help
7 identify existing efforts in the county and to inform a
8 countywide trauma-informed care work group that will be
9 convened moving forward. And this work group will really
10 be tasked with developing that agenda that I mentioned
11 that will be implemented in LA county. There will also be
12 an environmental scan that will be conducted in
13 partnership with those as part of the working group. And
14 First 5 LA recognizes that there may be interest in
15 various sectors, populations, and approaches for this
16 work. And the exploratory session is meant to bring all
17 those parties together to help identify the points of
18 alignment and future joint efforts using, again, that
19 collective impact framework as we approach this work.

20 The three arrows on the bottom of this visual
21 depict ongoing strands of work that will continue
22 throughout year one of implementation and beyond. The
23 first arrow listed there is to continue to identify and
24 assess alignment with emerging opportunities that may
25 arise as time passes that are timely opportunities for

1 First 5 LA to jump in and contribute in various ways.
2 This includes assessing our own existing investments for
3 opportunities to align with the TI care systems change
4 work.

5 The second arrow listed here is around
6 partnership building. This is actually an activity, as
7 Reena mentioned, that started early in our strategic
8 planning process last year as our work group would
9 research and reach out to stakeholders in the field. We
10 began to develop relationships. And we know that systems
11 change is complex and it's not something that we can do on
12 our own, and so we need to do this in partnership with
13 others.

14 The third arrow is our strand of work around
15 board and staff education on the topic of trauma-informed
16 care. We plan to continue to have opportunities like
17 today to get board members and staff more familiar and
18 comfortable with the field of TI care as well as aware of
19 how First 5 LA is contributing to this work.

20 So to build off the previous slide, we'd like to
21 share with commissioners some of the key activities and
22 learning to date. The three main activities staff have
23 engaged in thus far include information gathering,
24 partnership building, and board and staff education and
25 development. Information gathering has really consisted

1 of researching different methods and efforts that are
2 happening round the nation and reaching out to experts to
3 learn more. And as part of that, staff have learned quite
4 a bit about the field and the types of efforts and how we
5 really should approach this work.

6 As Reena alluded to in her comments,
7 trauma-informed care extends across sectors. And First 5
8 LA, while we called our work in the health, mental health,
9 and substance abuse systems, we recognize that this work
10 needs to include and span across other sectors and
11 populations that may not be our focus in our strategic
12 plan. This is why it's helpful to have partners at the
13 table from the beginning to help identify those gaps and
14 opportunities where others may be able to step in where we
15 cannot.

16 Home visiting has also shown to be a promising
17 trauma-informed care practice. And is this where staff
18 really see a clear point of alignment with our investment
19 in the families outcome are around home visiting.

20 Components of our Welcome Baby program, such as
21 the client-centered approach, the motivational
22 interviewing home visitors have -- or utilize rather, and
23 the reflective supervision used are all considered
24 trauma-informed approaches. And further integration of
25 the TI care approaches in our home visiting investments is

1 an emerging opportunity that staff is exploring.

2 Our second key activity has been around
3 partnership building. As I mentioned, it started quite
4 some time ago and will be a critical component of the
5 systems change work moving forward. In addition to the
6 identification of the three co-conveners for the initial
7 exploratory session, staff have participated on the
8 statewide ACEs policy working group that was convened
9 through the Center For Youth Wellness.

10 That statewide group comprised of representation
11 from a variety of agencies and organizations, met
12 regularly for the last year, and developed an action plan
13 which was included in your packet that looks like this.
14 And that action plan was just released and made public
15 last week at a convening of stakeholders in this field and
16 it was very well received. These are statewide
17 recommendations. And since First 5 LA participated in the
18 development of and has endorsed this action plan, we
19 envision that the strategies included in this document
20 will help inform the direction LA county will move in and
21 will really serve as a starting point for our work.

22 Some of the lessons learned based on our
23 partnership work has -- is that process -- this process
24 really takes a lot of time to bring together a number of
25 partners and use a collective impact approach to agree

1 upon a common agenda and implementation takes time. And
2 there was a proverb that was used or shared rather at the
3 a statewide working group convening last week that really
4 resonated with me around this work, which is, if you want
5 to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

6 And we really feel as though it's important to
7 build these relationships on the front end to create that
8 buy-in and ownership over the work as it moves forward.
9 This will really help conversations down the line around
10 sustainable of these efforts as well.

11 And the last activity has been around the staff
12 and board development, which we've -- which includes staff
13 attending various conferences to learn more about efforts
14 in this field. And Reena mentioned earlier, we recently
15 had screening for staff and board members on James
16 Redford's documentary, Paper Tigers. The screening was
17 well received by staff but it reminded us of the
18 importance of a particular component of a trauma-informed
19 agency, which is the self-care of its staff.

20 Agencies that do work around trauma and toxic
21 stress and utilize a trauma-informed approach also spend
22 time to acknowledge the triggers for their staff based on
23 their own life experiences. We'd like to be sensitive to
24 that as we roll out this work. And so self-care is a
25 component that's critical for First 5 LA as it becomes a

1 trauma-informed agency.

2 And with that, we've put together a few questions
3 for commissioners to consider. But we're also open to
4 answer any questions that you all may have. Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Okay, folks, do you have
6 questions? We don't have to, you know, deal with those --
7 knowing commissioners around this table, you will have
8 other questions.

9 So Suzanne.

10 COMMISSIONER BOSTWICK: First of all, thank you
11 very much for the information. I just wanted to really
12 comment on that one last bullet that you talked about as
13 far as staff self-care. I think that's really, not only
14 for any type of triggers that might bring up with staff,
15 but trauma-informed providers are very stressed and
16 they're very fatigued. And it can be in a lot of
17 different arenas and we have to be aware of that, whether
18 it's a teacher with very, very challenged -- kids with
19 challenged behavior and they're having to deal with that
20 also. Even though they're trying to approach and be
21 actively listening and to provide support to these
22 children, it's very stressful on them. It's very
23 stressful for a lot of people doing that.

24 So I think that if there's part of this work that
25 can be bought over to more of the -- not necessarily

1 educational development, but maybe even some tips, some
2 learning behaviors, some reflective -- I guess I want to
3 say more support for the actual providers themselves
4 because that can be so crucial.

5 I know Commissioner Tilton and I were just
6 talking about earlier having to deal with particularly
7 stressful environments when you're talking about abuse and
8 neglect And how that really take as a toll on you. And so
9 I think we have to just keep that in mind about the
10 service providers.

11 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Trish.

12 COMMISSIONER CURRY: Thank you. And thank you
13 for being here. It was very helpful.

14 I think that one of the things we need to look at
15 is -- and we talked a little bit about this the other day
16 when we spoke -- is the prevention piece. Again, we're
17 working -- John and I are working with the Office of Child
18 Protection on that. And one of the things that we've
19 talked about many times is preventing families and
20 children from coming into the foster care system because
21 of abuse and neglect and how can we help those at-risk
22 families in the communities so that they don't get to that
23 point. And one of the ways we can do that is through
24 providing trauma-informed care for those families that may
25 need it. They may not be so serious that they have to

1 come into -- under the jurisdiction of the foster care
2 system, but they may be able, with the help of services
3 like this, be able to stay out of the foster care system
4 which would be a great, wonderful thing.

5 And then for those kids that are in the foster
6 care system, we're seeing a growing number of kids under
7 the age of five, particularly zero to two kids, and we
8 know how the long-term trauma effects of that on those
9 children. So we need to be conscious of keeping children
10 out of the system and helping those that are in the
11 system.

12 And then last, when we spoke about this I think
13 at the last time we met on the commission and this issue
14 was brought up, Marv mentioned the fact that there was
15 some MHSA dollars, prevention and early intervention
16 dollars, that could be used for trauma-informed care. So
17 I would hope that we would really look at partnering on
18 those dollars and seeing how we could use those dollars
19 perhaps in the community, perhaps in the Best Start
20 communities to help those families and children that need
21 it.

22 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Nancy then Deanne.

23 COMMISSIONER AU: A number of thoughts. I
24 appreciated your earlier comment when you were doing your
25 initial presentation that many providers, and especially

1 the agencies are already dealing with trauma -- trauma --
2 traumatized individuals, but we previously did not think
3 of it as trauma-informed care as a response, but more in
4 terms of dealing with child neglect and abuse or whether
5 it's domestic violence or other kinds of violence that
6 unfortunately many children and families are dealing with.

7 So I think I need to be -- make it really clear
8 that we already have agencies that are being responsive in
9 that particular way of framing what they're dealing with.
10 But I also see the benefit of presenting a new way of
11 talking about this kind of issue -- social issue as
12 trauma-informed care because it talks about how we
13 respond, how we respond to the individuals that have had
14 the unfortunate experience of being traumatized very early
15 on.

16 So anyway I just wanted to make that statement
17 and make that acknowledgment in terms of you presenting it
18 as well to acknowledge folks already -- and many are in
19 this room -- that have for many years have been dealing
20 with these issues.

21 Now, in the context of First 5 LA, being that our
22 focus, based on our new strategic plans, that we really
23 want to be as upstream as possible in terms of prevention,
24 that I think Suzanne's comment about the need to pay
25 attention to caregivers and caregivers -- not only those

1 that are encountering individuals that have the
2 traumatized, but also caregivers that have experienced
3 trauma themselves, that -- that may by virtue of working
4 with these clients have residual reactions that put them
5 in positions of not being able to respond the way they
6 need to respond.

7 And just recently I saw a Dr. Phil segment about
8 this horrific child abuse case up in Washington where five
9 children that were adopted by this couple were essentially
10 tortured and starved. It was such a horrendous situation.
11 And the thing that got in my head was, what may have made
12 these monsters. And they probably were also victims of
13 trauma themselves.

14 So, you know, it's -- when we talk about
15 prevention, it's having to pay attention also to the
16 caregivers or the folks that are there to respond.

17 So -- so then I'm not sure what role First 5 LA
18 can play in -- in -- in trying to create an agenda, but I
19 think we need to keep that in our thoughts. But also,
20 again, I think what the work that we're doing with our
21 place-based work, with our family strengthening, I think
22 still even becomes even more critical because we really
23 have to start there when the child is the most helpless
24 and dependent.

25 And, anyway, that's my thing. So I just want to

1 be clear that we're not -- it is somewhat of semantics
2 here, trauma-informed care, but then traditionally a lot
3 of the agencies have already been dealing with this.

4 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Thank you, Nancy.
5 Deanne.

6 COMMISSIONER TILTON: I agree with everything
7 that people have said. I spent a year with U.S. Attorney
8 General's task force researching the issue of
9 trauma-informed care, particularly how that affects the
10 justice system: Young people in jail, young people
11 committing suicide, all kinds of horrible things that can
12 happen when you live in a violent or traumatic
13 environment. And of course, I worked with Vince Felitti
14 for years on his ACEs study so we can look at outcomes
15 much -- at a much lower strata, including every health
16 care problem you can identify that can be related to
17 traumatic experiences.

18 I brought this up to my colleagues regarding who
19 might be interested in contributing to this and how we
20 might help because trauma is, you know, central to our
21 work. We have a conference in March that's on children's
22 traumatic grief and loss, which brings to mind the fact
23 that we sometimes forget that very young children
24 experiencing the lost of a sibling, the loss of a parent,
25 whatever, may be brought into a system that tries to

1 convince them everything's going to be okay and may be
2 smothering them with all kinds of love and affection, but
3 that trauma is deep embedded in their hearts and minds.
4 And it also goes to children in homes with domestic
5 violence, which is one of the biggest oversights -- when I
6 say oversight, we do not recognize the fact that when
7 there is domestic violence in the home, if there are
8 children in the home, they are traumatized by definition
9 because they depend on their caregivers. And if their
10 caregiver are hurting each other, whether or not they're
11 hurting their kids, there's trauma.

12 So -- and I have all these papers that have been
13 presented for our conference about even using art in
14 identifying process in trauma in children and families
15 were really deeply involved in the effects of trauma on
16 children.

17 And as Suzanne said, the case you got all upset
18 about, you didn't have to look at the pictures of the
19 bodies and hear the coroner give the reports and listen to
20 the whole detailed description of how these -- in one
21 case, three children under two got stabbed to death by
22 their mother right here in LA county. We're not talking
23 about Washington. We're talking about LA county. So
24 that's the extreme side of it. And intertwined with that
25 is this domestic violence issue that we haven't really

1 addressed very well.

2 But I guess that is all to say what is the
3 product we want? What would be the outcome? Secondly,
4 there are a lot of people who want to help. Yesterday in
5 a meeting there were people like Dr. Janice Woods who is
6 the pediatric specialist at Olive View. And I think we
7 made a list I promised of people. And I don't want to
8 forget law enforcement because that's people's sense of
9 safety. And they need to be trauma informed, not just
10 trauma responsive. They need to understand what they are
11 dealing with at a much more, I don't know, basic level.
12 And they really want to prevent this from happening.
13 People don't think that they're that concerned, but I tell
14 you, you talk to a child abuse officer, and they'll say, I
15 want to be involved in how to prevent this. I'm so tired
16 of going out and seeing these terrible situations. Talk
17 to somebody going out on domestic violence calls where
18 there's kids in the home and I don't know what to do with
19 them, they don't look like they're hurt, and the mother
20 didn't want to press charges. So they -- you know, they
21 take her to court and leave and there's a two-year old and
22 a three-year old standing there in the house or hiding
23 under the bed.

24 So -- so I guess I would like to emphasize that
25 we would like to be part of trying to find an outcome of

1 this that makes -- truly makes a difference because nobody
2 in my world doesn't know that there is trauma that -- that
3 trauma is affecting all of us. It's affecting -- I am
4 trauma -- I'm traumatized by our child death review team
5 meetings; not only those, but the child suicide meetings
6 and the near-fatal cases, even issues where little kids
7 are abducted and traumatized by losing their identity and
8 then returned as though now they're happy because they're
9 home with their parents again, but they're not okay.

10 So -- so I think the schools need to be involved
11 and I think law enforcement needs to be involved. I think
12 pediatricians who deal with families need to be involved.
13 Certainly, therapists. Obviously, mental health and
14 public.

15 So I will come up with a list of key people that
16 I think would -- whom I think would really like to help
17 make this happen. And I certainly personally hope you
18 stay connected to me. And perhaps you can come and make a
19 presentation about this. We just met yesterday, so it
20 will be, you know, not immediate when we meet again.

21 But the hands went up when I asked who might find
22 this something they would like to be involved in. I'm so
23 excited because much of what we do is hard for me to tie
24 the whole safety, domestic violence, protecting children
25 without people saying, no, we're not child abuse and

1 neglect. Well, this is a quality of life for everybody in
2 our society, every single person in our society is
3 affected by the influence of trauma and particularly on
4 very young children which is our focus.

5 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Thank you, Deanne.

6 Judy then back you to, Nancy.

7 COMMISSIONER ABDO: I think we need some focus on
8 not creating trauma that -- by neglect, by saving money
9 within the county system, and by not thinking about it for
10 a long time. We have placed many families in a position
11 of trauma because they're going homeless now. Given all
12 of the housing issues that we have in our county that are
13 -- are very difficult to solve. But we need to remember
14 that it's us causing that trauma when a family loses their
15 housing and when a family becomes very vulnerable to
16 domestic violence because of the stress that they're
17 undergoing about maybe losing that house. And I think we
18 need to take that step back and look at what are we doing
19 that -- we talk about prevention, but we're actually
20 causing and how do we change that, how do we turn that
21 around.

22 And I just want to hearken back to a conversation
23 we had a couple of months ago I think it was about foster
24 families who are our -- our first step when there is a
25 situation of trauma that -- where a child needs to leave

1 whatever their situation is, and the -- the family that
2 they're going to, the foster family, can't afford child
3 care and so their placed in a position of stress because
4 they're doing the good thing of taking in a child and then
5 being stressed further because they can't get -- they
6 can't get a child care subsidy. And we need to look at
7 that as a state. It's certainly not something we can
8 solve in our county, but it is a big deal.

9 COMMISSIONER TILTON: May I just ask a question
10 so we don't forget what she just asked? My understanding
11 is now that relative who are foster parents, relative
12 caregivers/foster parents, can be reimbursed for child
13 care for the children they took in. Is that not true of
14 foster parents who are not related?

15 COMMISSIONER ABDO: I believe they have to be
16 qualified -- income qualified.

17 COMMISSIONER TILTON: Duane probably knows more
18 about this.

19 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: You know, that's -- that's
20 a whole different discussion.

21 COMMISSIONER TILTON: It is. I just don't want
22 to let that go because I thought, whoa.

23 COMMISSIONER CURRY: Well, it is important. And
24 Judy's right. It's not as important because of the fact
25 that it creates trauma on the caregiver, but what's even

1 worse than that is we now have people that won't be foster
2 parents so we don't have caregivers. So it creates a
3 whole other problem, but it is -- it's very complex.
4 Duane could explain it way better than I can. But it is
5 complex and the pot of money has to be shared with a lot
6 of different people. So we can't be in the situation -- I
7 don't think we want to be in a situation, whether it's
8 either fund these at-risk families in the community or
9 fund foster families. It shouldn't be that way. I think
10 part of what Judy's saying is, you know, we create some of
11 the stress ourselves and trauma ourselves.

12 MS. BELSHE: And if I may, the -- Judy's comment
13 about the law needs to change. We've had some discussions
14 as a commission about the law, legislation that was
15 introduced, the status of that bill. This is absolutely
16 going to be an issue we'll be talking about in 2016.

17 COMMISSIONER ABDO: I think we need to
18 acknowledge that the law -- even if the law were to
19 change, there's not enough money to serve the children who
20 are in the system and who are newly in the system. It's
21 not -- it's not going to be solved without way more money
22 at the state level for childcare.

23 MS. BELSHE: Which is a part of this -- I mean,
24 this board two years ago put it's thumb on the scale in
25 terms of priorities around early care and education as our

1 number one policy and advocacy priority. That was
2 reaffirmed in the new strategic plan. We talked a little
3 bit about that in the last meeting or so. We absolutely
4 are providing leadership in the statewide effort as well
5 as local efforts to expand the pot. And it's terrific to
6 see -- you have to spend what, roughly \$600 million in the
7 past two years in additional funding. That's terrific.
8 Not enough.

9 So these are not mutually exclusive issues as
10 you're saying, Judy. There's a need to clarify the law as
11 it relates to the foster youth. At the same time, we need
12 to broaden the pot. This organization can play a
13 leadership role.

14 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Nancy, you have something
15 to say?

16 COMMISSIONER AU: Yeah. I'm hope that, when you
17 listed the initial three partners, most of them are grant
18 givers, endowment, community partners.

19 So I think it's important to add to the
20 partnership agencies such as Commissioner Tilton and
21 mental health and -- as well as the children's commission
22 to the table in terms of partnering and -- because the
23 conversation is really about, maybe the re -- changing the
24 focus from just a diagnosis of the individual coming into
25 the system, but how we respond. When we talk about

1 trauma-informed care, it is really talking about how we
2 respond.

3 And so I'm hoping there would be a phase two in
4 terms of partnership building.

5 MS. FAED: Yeah. Actually, we've started that
6 engagement already with all the county systems. I think
7 the three initial partners just happened, as Reena said,
8 it just happened to fall into place with conversations
9 initially, and that they were interested in this work and
10 ready to move forward in terms of having just the initial
11 exploratory session, but that county systems will
12 definitely be present and are critical to this work moving
13 forward and will be at the table.

14 MS. NUNO: There's an awareness about the
15 cross-sector aspect of this and the public/private
16 outgroup that needs to come together. And I think that
17 that's the place where Reena and Pegah were emphasizing
18 that, at the end of some steps in the activities that they
19 share, it's going to happen. We're going to have a work
20 group that emerges from that. And to the point that is
21 being made across the table here, there -- this is a vast
22 area, as we have said from the beginning. And appreciate
23 your point about that we really want to acknowledge and be
24 aware that the responsiveness is already within the
25 system. The frame of trauma informed may not be as

1 rooted. And so we're seeking to an entry point to all of
2 that and to scan the -- the funders, as was mentioned, was
3 a result of an opportunistic moment where we're leveraging
4 some expressed interest with others that want to
5 collaborate immediately on this to get this ball going.
6 But it will evolve into a cross-sector representation.

7 I think what's really critical, and staff touched
8 on this, is the scan to identify, you know, what
9 specifically is the value of our contribution when so many
10 others have also wanting and should be part of considering
11 how wide this is of an issue.

12 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Chris.

13 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON: Seems to me to be kind of
14 a unique time, the Office of Child Protection is going to
15 be coming out with their report in response to the blue
16 ribbon's commission's critiques. And I think there's kind
17 of critical mass to really partner with a bunch of
18 different agencies right now. And the way I kind of think
19 of it is, there's multiple entry points or ways that we
20 can kind of make -- there's the primary prevention aspect.
21 And Suzanne can probably speak to this better. And then
22 secondary prevention, and then some ways the courts could
23 be involved in there.

24 There has been interest expressed county -- in
25 the board offices in looking at, you know, before overt

1 trauma has happened, kind of using the children's court --
2 find your prevention pretty much. I think that's also an
3 opportunity if you're kind of looking for areas.

4 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Trish.

5 COMMISSIONER CURRY: I just wanted to thank
6 everybody at First 5 for taking -- we know this is a
7 really serious and a role that we've taken a leadership
8 position in and convening people and partners. And I just
9 think, you know, it's great that we're doing this.

10 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Anybody else?

11 Let me get two cents in. My first -- I'm going
12 to start off with a question and then make a couple of
13 comments. I guess my question is to Rafael and
14 Antoinette. To what degree are our Best Start communities
15 identifying trauma as being core and essential, you know,
16 as relates to the -- some of the RFPs we just approved
17 today? And how -- how is that a thread through a lot of
18 communities? So that's just a question. I don't know --
19 I don't know the answer to that.

20 MS. ANDREWS: Some of the communities are -- have
21 identified -- thank you -- violence. For example, Metro
22 has identified that they really want to tackle violence
23 inside and outside the home. At this point, they may or
24 may not be looking at it through a trauma-informed lens.
25 But one of the conversations we've been having internally

1 is, how do we think about Best Start through a
2 trauma-informed lens? Do trauma-informed community
3 building, which is a document that's been kind of floating
4 around our department because the -- the communities and
5 the families within those communities experience a lot of
6 trauma.

7 So as Reena and Pegah have been talking, I've
8 been jotting down notes around, how do we make sure that
9 the work that's moving forward at the systems level is
10 also being -- also informing the work that's happening
11 within the Best Start communities, so when we bring
12 grantees together, for example, they are -- they will be
13 working with our partnerships to implement activities
14 around bringing parents together, parents who have been
15 traumatized. So how do we ensure that, as they're
16 building those social connections, that becomes a buffer
17 to the trauma they may be experiencing?

18 So there's so many examples throughout the
19 communities where we can look at the activities that
20 they're doing and then use a trauma-informed lens and,
21 again, be a resource to them as they move the work
22 forward.

23 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: And this gets to a comment.
24 Because, even if communities aren't identifying, we know
25 the communities that we're serving being a high degree of

1 stressors in those communities. So if we take the lead
2 around trauma-informed information, I think that's good.

3 Secondly, as we look at this whole issue of
4 trauma-informed care and we look at QRIS, for example, or
5 either SB-94, let's think about the connections because it
6 is important that we understand that the work we do with
7 parents, the work we do with child care providers is
8 important around trauma-informed care. And a lot -- I
9 mean, you know, the conversation has been going around,
10 oh, we need more child care for foster care children. And
11 that is most certainly true. But even if you have child
12 care for every child in foster care, you have a provider
13 base who's not trained in trauma-informed care. So we
14 need -- and I think we can take at the lead around making
15 sure that part of our system of QRIS considers
16 trauma-informed care for child care providers who are
17 dealing with a lot of these children who are coming from
18 at-risk neighborhoods.

19 And then, finally, as Judy suggested, you really
20 need to look at the basic needs that families are dealing
21 with. It's not only housing; it's clothing, it's food,
22 and health needs, basic things like that. And then we
23 need to assess what's going on in the community. I was at
24 a talk with LaSara last week down at the library, and he
25 was saying number one department -- the department who's

1 lost more money as a result of the economic downswing was
2 HUD. Well, it's no surprise we have so many people
3 homeless now. And so -- I mean, he just said,
4 disproportionately HUD lost more dollars than any other
5 government agency in Washington over the last like six to
6 eight years.

7 So we need to keep our eye on some of the larger
8 issues and relate it to the issues that are going on with
9 our families and communities because a lot of this stuff
10 is just not by coincidence. There are policy decisions
11 that have been made. There are laws that have been dealt
12 to that's causing families to get into dire situations
13 than we've had to deal with before.

14 So thank you all very much. Once again was well
15 informed conversation.

16 And I think at this time, folks, we'll take a
17 ten-minute break and then we'll reconvene.

18 (A brief break.)

19 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Katie and Debra to talk
20 about ECE consortium. That's the topic we have. So take
21 it away, ladies.

22 MS. COLMAN: Thank you. Good afternoon,
23 commissioners. My name is Debra Colman, and I am a
24 program officer in the program development department.
25 And I'm here presenting with Katie Fallin, the assistant

1 director of research and evaluation, but also the lead for
2 the ECE outcome area for First 5 LA's new strategic plan.

3 So we are here today to provide you an update on
4 the expiring initiative process for the ECE workforce
5 consortium. So as a reminder, per the governance
6 guidelines, all contracts and grants have an end date and
7 are expected to end on time. Any future funding after
8 that contract term must be aligned with the new strategic
9 plan. The ECE workforce consortium will end on June --
10 June 2016. And today, we're going to share the process
11 that they went through in the expiring initiatives process
12 just like any of the other initiatives scheduled to end
13 and share an update how some of the projects are aligned
14 with the new strategic plan.

15 So our goals for today. First, I'm going to
16 provide you basic overview of the ECE workforce consortium
17 so you can understand the consortium's history and its
18 accomplishments. Then Katie will share and really build
19 an understanding of the connection between the ECE
20 workforce consortium and First 5 LA's current strategic
21 plan. Finally, Katie will provide staff recommendations
22 for the use of the ECE workforce consortium's remaining
23 funds.

24 So the ECE workforce consortium, this was a
25 five-year, \$52 million allocation. It was approved in

1 September 2011. And the consortium really works to
2 support the recruitment and education and preparation of
3 an effective and diverse ECE workforce in order to achieve
4 the following goals: First, an expanded and better
5 qualified workforce, increased quality of ECE practices
6 and programs, as well as coordinated, aligned, and more
7 effective ECE professional development systems.

8 Now, before we get into the ECE workforce
9 consortium, which is a very complex, multifaceted project,
10 we thought we would step back and look at the ECE
11 workforce professional development structure. There
12 really are two strands that we talk about professional
13 development in for the ECE workforce. We want to walk you
14 through that to give you a little context today.

15 So first, one strand is the higher education
16 system. When we're talking about higher education, we
17 mean community colleges, the Cal State system, the UC
18 system -- in LA county, that's UCLA -- and also private
19 colleges and universities. We also have a completely
20 separate system, the training subsystem. This is where a
21 lot of providers get ongoing support, whether it's through
22 resource and referral agencies, nonprofit organizations
23 like LAUP, for-profit organizations, or government
24 institutions like the LA County Office of Child Care or
25 the LA County Office of Education.

1 So with that in mind, let me share with you the
2 structure of the ECE workforce consortium. The first
3 thing to know is LAUP is the leader of this project. They
4 coordinate the work. They provide the subcontractors,
5 contracts to all the projects, and really keep
6 communication going between all of the different projects.
7 Now, we have six projects that are part of this
8 consortium. They're with us because we do have a lot of
9 information to share even though it's a high-level
10 overview. One of the things to keep in mind is, these six
11 projects actually existed before the consortia. They were
12 actually all brought together to have better aligned work,
13 to talk together, and do systems alignment. So let me
14 give you a quick walk through of these projects and how
15 they relate to both the higher education subsystem and the
16 training subsystem.

17 First, we have higher education subsystem, the
18 child development workforce initiative. Next, we have
19 project vistas. And, finally, partnerships for education
20 -- see if I can get this straight because we always just
21 call it affectionately PEACH. Partnerships for Education,
22 Articulation, and Coordination Through Higher Education.
23 That's a mouthful. That's why we call it PEACH. So three
24 projects in the higher education subsystem addressing the
25 needs of the ECE workforce through that subsystem.

1 Also, we have three projects in the training
2 subsystem: Steps to Excellence, Gateways For Early
3 Educators, and ECE professional learning committees.

4 Now, in our next few slides, we're going to give
5 you a quick overview of each project and highlight some of
6 the most recent accomplishments of the consortia.

7 Okay. Institutions of higher education. So
8 these, once again, are our three education subsystem
9 projects. That means that somehow they're connected to a
10 college or university to do their work. So CDWI, the
11 Child Development Workforce Initiative. This is a project
12 that works in partnership with nine community colleges
13 across LA county. It really supports students in pursuing
14 ECE degrees and it helps with direct services that
15 supports creating an educational plan, providing
16 information about the ECE field as a career path, and
17 supporting them with tutoring.

18 Also, Project Vistas. That really focuses on
19 family child care providers, helping them increase their
20 educational attainment and career goals. It's a wonderful
21 partnership with a project through the East LA College
22 Foundation. And it provides family child care providers
23 with advisors, access to community college classes,
24 contextualized course work as well as classes in Spanish.

25 Now, PEACH is our final project in that education

1 subsystem. It's a little bit different. It's really
2 focused on systems change and advocacy. So PEACH is a
3 collaborative of about 20 different colleges and
4 universities throughout LA county. It really focuses on
5 strengthening the ECE pathway and its key projects to date
6 has been advocacy work around creating an ECE credential,
7 changes in the child development permit in the state of
8 California, clear articulation pathways so that college
9 students can transfer effectively to four-year
10 universities, and also strengthening the ECE VA programs
11 and PhD programs.

12 Okay. Now we're going to move on to a quick
13 overview of the projects that exist in our training
14 subsystems. Again, those are projects through resource
15 and referral agencies, nonprofits, and government
16 institutions. First, many of you are familiar with Steps
17 to Excellence. That was one of the first QRIS programs in
18 LA county. We do have two currently in LA county. Steps
19 to Excellence is one of them. So they are a quality
20 rating and improvement program. They rate ECE sites as
21 well as provide quality improvement services to these ECE
22 sites.

23 Now, they partner with Gateways for Early
24 Education to provide coaching. Gateways program is a
25 project of the Child Care Alliance of LA County. They

1 provide quality and career coaching to providers,
2 especially child care -- family child care providers
3 throughout LA county.

4 Finally, wrapping up our projects in our training
5 subsystem is a program through the LA County Office of
6 Education. This is the ECE Professional Learning
7 Communities. And the ECE Professional Learning
8 Communities provides training, especially to TK, or
9 transitional kindergarten, teachers to support their
10 knowledge of early care and education. With the
11 additional of transitional kindergarten, or TK, to the
12 K-12 system, there's been a need to really increase the
13 amount of skills and knowledge that teachers have to
14 support four-year olds at that time in their development.

15 So they are six individual projects, but when you
16 bring them together into a singular collaborative, they
17 are the ECE workforce consortium. They have monthly
18 meetings where they share best practices, an advisory
19 group that helps steer the work moving forward, work
20 groups those focus on program alignment and policy, a lot
21 of shared best practices.

22 So what has -- this is a snapshot of what the
23 consortium has achieved. So I'm going to share some of
24 the professional development accomplishments just over the
25 past year. So through programs like CDWI, over 200

1 college students received AAs or BAs in ECE. Through
2 Project Vistas, we have over 250 child care providers
3 increasing their education with over six units of ECE.
4 Also, LACOE with the ECE Professional Learning Communities
5 Project really increased the knowledge and skills of
6 transitional kindergarten providers, while Gateways
7 coached over 1,200 providers in career and quality
8 services.

9 Now, I'd like to elevate also the advocacy and
10 systems accomplishments. And these have been really
11 momentous. First of all, Steps to Excellence and Gateways
12 for Early Education really laid some of the foundation for
13 the quality rating and improvement system. Over the last
14 few meetings, you've heard from some of my colleagues,
15 Katie Fallin and Kevin Dieterle, talk in depth about the
16 work that First 5 is embarking on QRIS. And Steps and
17 Gateways really helped us get to this point. They laid a
18 foundation. They worked together to leveraging funds
19 through the Early Learning Challenge Grant and Race to the
20 Top, which is a federal grant, as well as working in
21 partnership around the QRIS state block grant for
22 California preschool providers. On top of this, they have
23 been instrumental in working with the QRIS architects
24 group as a part of applying for the impact money coming
25 from First 5 California.

1 PEACH has been a lead in really moving the ECE
2 credential and supporting the work around the child
3 development permit revisions. They put together a brief,
4 among many other things, that they presented at the
5 California Commission for Teacher Credentialing, actually,
6 last year. They have really advocated for this to be a
7 thoughtful process in shifting what is needed to
8 professionalize and support the fields around ECE. They
9 influenced CTC, the California Commission on Teacher
10 Credentialing, to establish a panel to review the child
11 development permit.

12 Now, they also have two members of PEACH that
13 have been appointed to this panel providing their
14 expertise and other PEACH members are continuously in
15 Sacramento at every meeting providing input and public
16 comment to what is happening around the child development
17 permit changes and also talking about the ECE credentials.
18 In fact, as recent as last week, the Child Development
19 Permit Panel actually spoke in depth about the need for
20 the ECE credential as really a zero-to-eight teaching
21 credential, and has made the decision that in
22 December there will be two papers coming out from this
23 panel. The first will actually talk about the
24 recommendations for changes in the child development
25 permits. The second will be the other items that are

1 needed to support the ECE field and the ECE, workforce,
2 namely and in part the ECE credential.

3 So with all that said, as I shared earlier, the
4 ECE workforce consortium will be ending in June 2016, but
5 there is an anticipated fund balance remaining that we
6 believe will be between 2.5 and \$3 million. Now, this
7 project has gone through the expiring initiatives review
8 process. It was a very thoughtful process. And in May
9 2015, when it began the review process, it was decided to
10 pause and come back once the ECE strategic plan was better
11 under way in the implementation phase. Now, we can see
12 many of the different alignment pieces between some of the
13 work at the ECE workforce consortium and the new strategic
14 plan.

15 At this point, I'm going to turn it over to
16 Katie, and she's going to share more information about
17 that alignment between the consortium and the new
18 strategic plan, as well as staff's recommendations to
19 bring back to you, the commission, in January 2016.

20 MS. FALLIN: Thanks, Debra. Good afternoon,
21 everyone.

22 So as Debra pointed out, classification as part
23 of the process of expiring initiatives is really looking
24 at the connection between the work -- the work -- prior
25 work and future work. And as Debra really pointed out,

1 the consortium projects really have been innovative and
2 have moved in a lot of really important areas. Based on
3 our analysis and feedback from our internal expiring
4 initiatives team, some of the projects within the ECE
5 consortium align with our new strategic plan, while others
6 do not.

7 So I just want to kind of frame this within our
8 strategic plan, remind us all of where this fits within
9 the ECE strategy. It really -- as a reminder, we have the
10 access strategy, which is more of the policy and advocacy
11 work around spaces and more funding, as well as it
12 prevents in the various policies related to ECE. The
13 quality strategy, on the other hand, is -- includes our
14 QRIS activities, which you've heard at length, as well as
15 strengthening the preparation and professional development
16 systems for early care and education providers. Some of
17 the projects that fall within that -- or projects or
18 activity areas really are moving forward with the ECE
19 credential as identified in our strategic plan as a
20 priority.

21 The next two projects really focus on integrating
22 California's early child educator competencies and other
23 quality standards, including QRIS, the early learning
24 foundations, within the preparation and ongoing
25 professional development systems for early educators, so

1 we are sure that the content of what new teachers get as
2 well as the early educators who continue their
3 professional development is aligned with what we know
4 works and is also connected to our ongoing QRIS work as
5 well.

6 In addition, another priority in our strategic
7 plan was the -- is the ECE workforce registry, which is
8 the project we began -- a pilot project that began in 2011
9 with San Francisco. And it's really a database to collect
10 information about the ECE workforce in -- starting in the
11 regions but with the hope of expanding statewide so that
12 we can really collect data on the workforce and look at
13 trends and the needs of the workforce moving forward.

14 And, lastly, our QRIS work. And as a reminder,
15 we're both looking at building that system, that uniform
16 system within our county, as well as supporting the
17 continued involvement of programs who've already been
18 rated. So sort of that bridge to the new system that
19 we're building. So there's sort of two strands going at
20 the same time.

21 So when we look at work of the ECE consortium,
22 there are three projects that we see as aligned. PEACH,
23 because of its connection for sort of ECE credential and
24 they're really the ones in our county who are doing that
25 work at the state level and really pushing that agenda

1 forward. There's a lot of momentum, as Debra said, in
2 that work. And in addition, the work of Gateways and
3 Steps to Excellence because of the connection to QRIS.

4 So you know, as Debra mentioned PEACH has really
5 made great strides towards the re-establishment of ECE
6 credentialing in California, as well as the modifications
7 to the permit matrix. And we feel that by continuing to
8 support PEACH, First 5 LA can continue to ensure the
9 momentum isn't lost and it continue on that trajectory.
10 And we also see an opportunity to align the work of PEACH
11 with our new ECE policy and advocacy strategy that is in
12 development so that we can -- we really feel like there's
13 a lot of power potentially in connecting those 20 early
14 childhood professionals, the faculty, from the
15 institutions with advocates in the field. And we really
16 feel like that alignment is an opportunity to move
17 forward.

18 In addition to the quality rating and improvement
19 system work, we have worked, as you know, very closely
20 with the QRIS architects as we call them, our partners in
21 that work, to identify priorities, and they really
22 collectively agree that it's critical for to us continue
23 the services to sites already participating in QRIS so we
24 don't lose that work. To this end, at last month's
25 commission meeting, you approved the use of a portion of

1 LAUP's fund balance to meet the site targets for First 5
2 California's IMPACT initiative. And while this decision
3 enables providers who are part of LAUP's network to
4 continue to receive services through QRIS, the providers
5 served by Step and Gateways, who are largely family child
6 care providers are scheduled to drop out of QRIS after
7 June 2016 due to the ending of the federal Race to the Top
8 Early Learning Challenge Grant, as well as our ECE
9 workforce consortium.

10 We had a long discussion at our last architects
11 meeting about priorities and what we felt was really
12 critical. And there was consensus among the architect
13 organizations members that it's critical to maintain
14 participation of these family child care providers in QRIS
15 moving forward so that -- because they've already been
16 rated, that they continue to work on their quality and
17 continue to be a part of that system as we align and build
18 one uniform system.

19 We're in the process -- sorry. I didn't mean to
20 move forward. We're in the process of looking at the
21 cost. So as Debra mentioned, the remaining fund balance
22 is about -- estimated to be about 2.5 to \$3 million.
23 We're in the process of establishing detailed cost
24 estimates, looking at how many providers are we talking
25 about, what's the cost to continue that work. And we are

1 confident that that -- that the fund balance from the
2 consortium would be sufficient to support both projects
3 for the next two to three years.

4 Now, for the QRIS work, that timing aligns well
5 with when we anticipate reaching the milestone of having
6 one system. For the PEACH work, we think, you know, it
7 could take longer than that, and we may need to come back,
8 but we also know that PEACH is working very hard already
9 talking to other funders and looking for additional
10 funding. So it may not be necessary.

11 We want to point out that, moving forward, should
12 we move forward with these two projects, we really see a
13 connection between PEACH and the architects, as well as I
14 mentioned earlier, connecting PEACH with our ECE policy
15 and advocacy initiative. We hope to have members from
16 PEACH -- to have two members be a part of our architects
17 table because we think there's an opportunity to really
18 think through the role in use of higher ed in QRIS,
19 perhaps embedding some of the standards of QRIS within the
20 curriculum, making sure that there is that strong
21 connection there.

22 So in terms of next steps, Debra already
23 mentioned that we plan to come back to you in January with
24 an action item to request approval of the use of the
25 remaining funds to continue the advocacy work of the PEACH

1 project and to continue the engagement of those sites
2 rated under Step and Gateways which continue to be a part
3 of it.

4 So we know this is a lot of information at end of
5 the day. I want to open it up for questions. Here are
6 two that we suggested. What are your thoughts about the
7 recommendation for the use of the remaining funds? And is
8 there anything else you would like to know before the
9 recommendation is brought back to the commission in
10 January?

11 MS. BELSHE: Let's get right to the most
12 important part.

13 MS. FALLIN: Mine's the preschool pirate on the
14 right.

15 MS. COLMAN: And those are two of my seven great
16 nieces. That is -- the little one is Mazy and the other
17 is Twyla. And we wanted to showcase their wonderful
18 costumes that they had recently.

19 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Okay. Thank you all.
20 Thank you very much, Debra and Katie.

21 Questions and comments, commissioners?

22 There's a lot -- I mean, there was a lot in that
23 presentation. And I just have the advantage that I used
24 to do this stuff. But if I hadn't did this stuff, it
25 would be pretty intricate. I mean, it's pretty complex.

1 So don't feel that any question is a bad question.

2 Suzanne.

3 COMMISSIONER BOSTWICK: That's good because --
4 because this could be bad.

5 You're talking about the best practices. I'm
6 always really interested in training. And so there was a
7 lot of money that's been put into training, a lot of
8 people that had, you know, outcomes for training, which I
9 think is really work great.

10 How can we -- because this can't go on forever
11 and now we're extending a smaller amount -- much smaller
12 amount of money than was first invested. So how can some
13 of these best practices or have any of these trainings
14 been incorporated into any of the higher learning
15 establishments to be part of their normal way of doing
16 trainings? Because that's one way to sustain this work,
17 is to have it accepted and used by higher education or any
18 other education.

19 MS. COLMAN: Sure. I think that's a really
20 thoughtful question about how training is sustained. So I
21 think some of the training is sustained through different
22 ways. Through the community colleges, they have been able
23 to leverage some additional money for the Child
24 Development Workforce Initiative Project. Training does
25 continue through the R and Rs, although what we're

1 advocating for and asking for is actually funding for
2 their coaching work.

3 I think what -- what comes to mind is actually
4 something that we have been working on that Katie touched
5 upon briefly that is part of our direction with our new
6 strategic plan. So as Katie shared, there are early ECE
7 competencies that have been adopted by the State in 2009.
8 One of our plans, since we are talking about systems
9 change and we thought this would be a great way to make a
10 long-term impact on the system, is focusing on those
11 colleges, community colleges, state colleges that are
12 already at the table through PEACH, bringing in more, and
13 mapping out their course work so that it is aligned to
14 these competencies. We're very excited about the
15 potential of not only alignment, but pure learning across
16 colleges so everyone going through an education -- a
17 higher education institution would receive the same
18 information.

19 At the same time, we have been working on a
20 mirror strategy through the R and Rs to have a curriculum
21 developed that also would incorporate those ECE
22 competencies. Also, a train-the-trainers model. And we
23 have been talking to the State R and R network about the
24 possibility of, if this works in LA, moving it up through
25 the state. So I think with the consortiums's professional

1 development work, we learned that we needed to embed it
2 into existing systems to really create sustainable change
3 through both the colleges and through the R and Rs.

4 MS. FALLIN: And I think that the advantage is
5 having, even though the work moving forward isn't called
6 the consortium and isn't exactly the same projects, the
7 participants and the entities involved are -- many of them
8 are the same. So they bring the lessons learned with them
9 to the work moving forward. And I think that's a really
10 -- even though we're calling these things something new, a
11 lot of the partners at the table are the same.

12 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Judy.

13 COMMISSIONER ABDO: I'll tell you that I have an
14 ECE credential. So this is not news to me. But what I --
15 I hope is that there will be an ECE credential again. And
16 I -- I think that it's important for this kind of
17 training, however it happens, to be not just TK teachers,
18 but K teachers and preferably K through three. But the
19 credential I have prepared me for K through three. That
20 was how they defined it then and -- but it allowed me to
21 have a director's permit under the child development
22 matrix. And it's crazy that there are these separate
23 programs. And I hope that part of what could happen is
24 that, in the credentialing, that eventually what could
25 happen is that child development teachers and

1 administrators could mush over to a credential and that
2 would get rid of the permit system because it doesn't make
3 any sense.

4 That's kind of where I am. And like Duane, I've
5 been deep in this stuff and it's --

6 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Too long. Too long.

7 Okay. Nancy and then we go to Karla.

8 COMMISSIONER AU: Not even the being familiar
9 with this whole system, ECE system, as Duane and Judy and
10 also Karla, but I guess coming from an outside
11 perspective, I ask a question, why hasn't there been those
12 incorporations? Because I -- I somehow don't fathom that
13 it would cost a whole lot more than what they have in
14 place right now, unless I'm missing something, for them to
15 establish what Judy talked about or -- well, the other is
16 that we also -- Duane mentioned the incorporation in the
17 previous presentation of trauma-informed care as being
18 embedded in the QRIS curriculum as well. So if you're
19 telling me that what Judy talked about has not happened
20 over the years, what is the -- the prospects of First 5
21 LA's involvement to see these changes occur?

22 (Multiple speakers)

23 COMMISSIONER ABDO: -- the short answer and then
24 I want to hear what they have to say. It's a complete
25 de-evaluating of the work that is done with zero to five

1 forever. It's not important work, so you don't pay the
2 people for it.

3 COMMISSIONER AU: So we're back to policy.

4 MS. FALLIN: Yes.

5 MS. BELSHE: Public awareness.

6 MS. FALLIN: And the establishment of credential
7 is one way of elevating the profession to be on par with
8 every other teacher so -- so to -- a recognition because
9 it isn't different. And in some ways it's harder to be --
10 to do it in a way that's developmentally appropriate and
11 recognizes the individual differences of children. So it
12 is definitely a political issue.

13 I think the other piece of integrating content
14 into its use of higher education in some ways is also
15 political, but it's also complicated because, in LA
16 county, we have so many -- there's so many -- I mean,
17 that's -- it seems like a problem across all of our
18 projects, is it's not necessarily money; it's coordination
19 and collaboration and people coming together and buying
20 into a systematic approach, and that's more what the
21 challenge is.

22 MS. COLMAN: And to build on what Katie said --
23 and also, Judy, that was a wonderful short answer. It is
24 the truth.

25 Part of the information that I think folks have

1 been talking about -- because I asked the same thing -- if
2 we had an ECE credential, what happened? Because it was
3 around in the '70s, then things happened. One of the
4 thing is, at that time elementary school principals really
5 wanted teachers to have the flexibility to move throughout
6 the grade levels and also the teachers union wanted
7 flexibility among their staff.

8 We have a shift in time going on right now that
9 is tremendous. We have a new grade system that really
10 emphasizes ECE with the transitional kindergarten and
11 expanded transitional kindergarten, bring a whole -- opens
12 up a whole new field so that there's a larger age span for
13 the ECE credential. And we are talking about a zero to
14 row to eight teaching credential.

15 The second piece is the change at California
16 Department of Education where really you're seeing zero to
17 eight seen as a span. And with the systems changes that
18 are going on, it's the right time to come back and move
19 forward with the ECE credential advocacy plan.

20 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Karla, this will be our one
21 last comment or question and then we need to move on.

22 COMMISSIONER PLEITEZ HOWELL: So along the lines
23 of the ECE credentials, moving forward with that, I'm
24 wondering if there's any way that we can think about how
25 we support that workforce that has been doing this for

1 20-plus years and doesn't have that credential and how
2 we're thinking about our strategy for figuring out how we
3 pull those folks along. And I think about some of the
4 work that LACOE has done around this issue working with
5 Cal State Community Colleges. So if we could use some of
6 these funds to actually take those best practices so that
7 we can inform the field for those folks that have
8 committed their lives to this work without a credential
9 and now there's this great aspirational component that
10 we're moving towards but we can't leave these individuals
11 behind, and there's a lot of really good practices that
12 they could give some people working with LACOE and getting
13 some of that as you all come back to us with the final
14 recommendations about, if there's anything we can take
15 from those lessons learned from the particular programs.

16 MS. COLMAN: Thank you, Karla.

17 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Okay.

18 MS. BELSHE: So first I want to acknowledge,
19 Debra -- I don't know if Debra's testified -- spoken --
20 not that it feels like -- has had the opportunity to
21 present to the committee. Nicely done. Very hard,
22 complex subject. And, again, to acknowledge Katie's
23 leadership of our ECE outcome area which is diverse and
24 complex, as you commissioners have seen over the recent
25 presentations.

1 Final word is, we will come back in January with
2 final recommendation. We need to do a little bit more
3 internal discussion to clarify whether or not we need to
4 waive a governance guideline for this to the extent this
5 work is aligned. It probably -- it shouldn't require a
6 waiver of the governance guideline. So I think that's
7 something we just need to clarify a bit further. I want
8 to note that for the record so that, if we come back in
9 January for a majority vote, you're not saying we changed
10 the rule or someone else more to the point might say, you
11 changed the rules midstream.

12 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Thank you all.

13 All right. Let's tee up for the next.

14 Aren't you always the star of the show? Welcome
15 back, Kim. How was Sabbatical?

16 MS. PATILLO: It was wonderful.

17 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Nice to have you back in
18 the mix. Okay. Who's going to start us off?

19 MS. CHANG: Good afternoon, commissioners. I'm
20 Annie Chang, senior policy program officer, policy,
21 intergovernmental affairs department. And we're going to
22 start off reminding you that at the last program and
23 planning committee meeting, Peter and I shared an overview
24 of our updates around how we at First 5 LA can support
25 more effective strategic and coordinated advocacy focus on

1 early care and education. And we are continuing to
2 discuss this with our partners and other organizations.
3 But we also noted last meeting that one of our goals in
4 developing this initiative is to build upon the existing
5 work that we've already been historically supporting, such
6 as the State Early Care and Education Budget Coalition, as
7 well as the Local Control Funding Formula Implementation
8 Coalition.

9 Today's presentation is sharing an example of our
10 investments in research and advocacy, and also how we at
11 First 5 LA plan and hope to work with other funders to
12 support the good work of organizations such as the
13 Advancement Project in this field.

14 As you recall last year, First 5 LA funded
15 Advancement Project to conduct an early care and education
16 landscape analysis for LA county, which was basically a
17 report that outlined the findings of research around
18 children's access to early care and education in LA
19 county, the quality of the available services, as well as
20 the status of the ECE workforce in LA county. As a
21 follow-up to that report, we, along with other key
22 funders, are supporting Advancement Project to work with
23 parents and community leaders to advocate for early
24 learning with our state representatives.

25 We're pleased that Kim Patillo Brownson is back

1 from Sabbatical. We're all very happy to have her and
2 that she's here today to share more with us. She is
3 Advancement Project's director of education equity and, as
4 we know, a champion for children and for families in
5 California.

6 So Peter and I will be available for questions
7 afterwards, but we really want to hand the presentation
8 over to Kim.

9 MS. PATILLO: Thank you for the opportunity to
10 give a little bit of an update on some of the work that
11 we've been doing. Actually, can you guys here me okay or
12 do I need the mike?

13 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Just put that next to you.

14 MS. PATILLO: All right. And I do think it's a
15 really interesting and somewhat unusual project in that we
16 did quite a bit of initial research here through the ECE
17 landscape project. And it has very sort of organically
18 really sort of moved from research to advocacy in the last
19 probably six to eight months.

20 Earlier, Kim mentioned that there is -- there are
21 ongoing efforts at the state level to essentially grow the
22 pie because the existing resources that we have we know
23 are insufficient to the problem. And what this project
24 aims to do, essentially, is to leverage some of the assets
25 that we know are right here and in our home town.

1 So the question of why we decided to sort of
2 focus on the LA delegation is pretty clear by the numbers.
3 First, is that the vast majority of the ECE funding that
4 comes to LA county comes from the State. If you look at
5 the apportionment between, for example, the Feds and the
6 State in the budget for early childhood throughout the
7 state, it's about a quarter from the Feds and
8 three-quarters from the State of California. And so we
9 are focusing on the Assembly and the Senate because that
10 is where the money is.

11 We're also focusing on the LA delegation in
12 particular for reasons that are very crisp and able to be
13 quantified. Right now, we are at a point which is in some
14 ways unprecedented. Right now, 38 percent of our Senate
15 is comprised of members of the LA delegation and 30
16 percent of our Assembly are also members of the delegation
17 from here, our home county. We also are in a moment where
18 we have for the first time in many moons, we have a Senate
19 pro tem who is from the LA area, deLeòn. And the Assembly
20 incoming Speaker Rendon is also from LA and is also a
21 former Head Start, Early Head Start, CSPP contractor
22 extraordinaire.

23 We also have, in addition in the Senate, the --
24 the chair of the appropriations committee is Ricardo Lara,
25 who comes from one of the districts that had some of the

1 highest access gaps in the county. And then the
2 appropriations chair on the Assembly side is Jimmy Gomez,
3 and then Assemblyman O'Donnell from Long Beach is the
4 education chair. For the last eight years that I've
5 worked on the California budget and policy side, I don't
6 think there has ever been quite so heavily weighted a set
7 of leaders that are from LA county. So there's an
8 opportunity I think to act. Of course, I will caveat that
9 with the incoming leadership committee changes will --
10 committee chairs will change, but I think there's an
11 expectation that, having the top two leaders in both the
12 Senate and the Assembly, is -- is something that will
13 actually pay dividends for LA county.

14 The last thing that I'll just mention about this
15 particular crop of legislators is that they are a group,
16 essentially, that are in it for the long haul. So in
17 2012, there was a legislative change which enables
18 legislators to spend 12 years in total between the
19 Assembly and the Senate. And right now, I think the
20 Assembly has completely turned over and are all going to
21 be eligible for 12 years with the exception of two
22 Assembly folks. The Senate has not turned over quite as
23 extensively, but what it means is that we have an
24 opportunity to build relationships with people who will be
25 there for some time. And relationship building can

1 actually pay off for us.

2 To back up a little bit, the ECE landscape scan
3 that we conducted last year, essentially, consisted of
4 three large areas of focus. The first was around access
5 gaps, quality gaps, and a state of play for the workforce.
6 The second issue that we were looking at was the past
7 roles of First 5 LA and other foundations and other county
8 commission around the state. And then the third report
9 was focused on potential future directions. This is sort
10 of a restatement of what the questions were that we were
11 analyzing.

12 To recap some of the major findings which I sort
13 of take around with me for any legislative visit. The top
14 line sort of shocking parts are, essentially, that, even
15 after many years of reinvestment and economic recovery, we
16 are -- we still have quite a ways to go. So we are at 41
17 percent for access for preschool-aged children meaning
18 that 59 percent of LA county's young children don't have
19 access to preschool. For zero-to-three year olds -- and
20 this is for licensed centers, we are at two percent, which
21 is a shock and awe number. I think that should startle
22 everyone.

23 What is also clear is that these access gaps are
24 not evenly distributed. Low-income areas and largely
25 Latino and African-American areas have these gaps in even

1 greater proportion. And so if you can imagine at two
2 percent and 41 percent are the rosier middling averages.

3 We also found that, although I think there is
4 much to be proud of in the QRIS system and for those of us
5 who work on the state budget, ensuring that there will be
6 dollars for QRIS going forward is going to be very
7 important. What we also know is that is there not yet
8 deep penetration and participation in part for lack of
9 funding. And so among center-based providers, we have
10 nine percent participation in LA county and two percent
11 among family child care homes. What that suggests,
12 obviously, is that we have made progress, but there is
13 work ahead.

14 So the objective in short -- and that's a lot of
15 words for an objective, but the shorter version of our
16 objective is really to inform and activate the LA
17 delegation to not just sort of sit complacently with
18 knowledge of these gaps but to actually move them to act
19 and to act together as a delegation representing LA
20 county.

21 The funding base for this project originally
22 began with the Atlas Family Foundation and was initially a
23 small grant from Richard Atlas who focused on infants and
24 toddlers and wanted to sort of help elevate parent voices
25 in district offices here in LA. The California Community

1 Foundation and First 5 LA significantly buttressed the
2 funding to enable us to do individual maps to be able to
3 do legislative visits with the policy directors in
4 Sacramento and to also have multiple points of contact
5 with the legislators.

6 It is -- to sort of hearken back to the original
7 report, one of the things I think a lot of other county
8 commissions do quite regularly and I think this is a good
9 example of is, essentially, leveraging dollars where First
10 5 is a contributor to a project but is met with an equal
11 amount of dollars from private foundations. And so we're
12 grateful for that opportunity.

13 Actually, I should say that you guys played a
14 very important role in actually helping to sort of make
15 the case to the other foundations. So that's also
16 something we appreciate immensely.

17 So the small, probably ten-point font there may
18 not be clear. But, essentially, the LA delegation
19 advocacy project begins with data analyses which is the
20 circle at the top. That is the data cuts by legislative
21 district so that no particular legislator can say, I'm
22 somehow immune, I don't think this is an issue for my
23 district. It actually shows where their sort of major
24 thoroughfares are, where their access gaps are most acute.
25 And there's a sort of process where denial is really hard

1 to maintain when you have numbers in front of you.

2 The advocacy materials are a compilation of ROI
3 arguments about the return on investment in terms of
4 specially ed savings and savings to grade repeats and also
5 obviously gains in academic success in the K-to-12 world.

6 The communications piece is actually something
7 that the California Community Foundation has focused on
8 heavily of wanting to make sure that there's media
9 outreach so that the message is not broadcast only to
10 legislators but also to sort of public will building
11 efforts. So actually, literally, right before I came
12 here, we were -- we did another run on the data for Latino
13 numbers in response to a legislative visit where they
14 asked, so how does this break down by race. We hadn't
15 actually quantified that for the original report. But
16 faced with the opportunity to do it for NPR, we got it
17 together and that was -- that will actually be the first
18 media interview which will feature some parents in the
19 southeast and some of the numbers for Latino access gaps
20 for some of our key legislative districts.

21 Parent engagement, I will dive into a little bit
22 further in detail. And then legislator education is,
23 obviously, the critical component of this to be able to
24 move the State budget.

25 So as I mentioned, the maps that we have created

1 are for each of the LA delegation districts. We've also
2 done the LAUSD school board districts and the county
3 supervisors districts as well. It's been an interesting
4 range of reactions. Some people seem sort of to be
5 expecting to see great numbers of gaps and then we've also
6 done a couple of visits where people have said that they
7 were startled or shocked or surprised that this was an
8 issue in their district. And that's exactly the sort of
9 reaction that we're hoping to essentially illuminate how
10 much of an issue this is for their constituents.

11 I mentioned that we are -- I will send along a
12 date and e-mail link as soon as we have the first media on
13 this, but I think the first one will be on the KPCC within
14 the next week. The goal is also to have a mix of print
15 media as well as and radio and also social and online
16 media as well.

17 In January, we're looking at January 29th as the
18 sort of local in-county event for legislators themselves
19 to attend. Friday is our home days for legislators, even
20 during budget season. So we are in the midst of actually
21 putting out all of our invitations this week.

22 So parent advocacy, training, and engagement. We
23 have been doing a couple of cohorts of parent advocacy
24 training in the southeast cities area for the last year
25 and a half. And although that parent advocacy work was

1 largely geared more towards LCFF and local school district
2 budgets, what we have learned is that those parents have
3 friends and those parents would like to also be able to
4 directly represent themselves in a first person sort of
5 way to not have policy advocates necessarily speak for
6 them, but that they can actually say, this is what's
7 difficult about what the conditions are like in a
8 particular legislative district.

9 So we conducted the very first training last week
10 to sort of familiarize the parents with a high-level
11 overview of what the budget process looks like here in
12 California and also have been training them on how to
13 essentially convey their stories in time limited ways, in
14 ways that connect with legislators, and also that creates
15 a sense of urgency. We're going to be featuring at
16 legislator event on January 29th a panel so that the
17 legislators will hear directly from their voting
18 constituents.

19 So right now, we are sort of in the early stages
20 of it. Under the sort of scope of work we have three sets
21 of visits. We, basically, are done with the very first
22 round of visits, which are really about data presentation
23 and to start relationship building. So to date, we've
24 done 34 visits in the capitol. We have five more planned
25 in December. And the range of reactions has been quite

1 varied and interesting. Some have had little exposure and
2 are very much new to early childhood. Some are very
3 explicitly fishing for policy ideas and legislation. And
4 others are pretty candid in saying, this is not my issue
5 or initially starting a visit by saying, well, saying this
6 isn't an issue for my constituents. So again, the maps
7 are a healthy backstop on that conversation to sort of
8 broaden that.

9 I think the more challenging thing that we are
10 starting to encounter is something of building immunity to
11 shocking numbers. And that is I think because we have had
12 to two years of good investments or reinvestments rather
13 in early childhood in the budget, there is a sense that
14 ECE has had its turn. There is also a sense, I think
15 mistakenly, that early transitional kindergarten will mean
16 that additional investments are not necessary. And so we
17 are quick to invite the opportunity to dispel those myths
18 and say that we have done good work, but they're -- the
19 works not done.

20 So maybe I'll stop there and ask if you guys want
21 to comment or ask questions.

22 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Yes. Judy.

23 COMMISSIONER ABDO: I think it's great that
24 you're working with the LA delegation, but are you also
25 working with the Governor on strategy for the Governor?

1 MS. PATILLO: So that is an interesting and
2 exciting recent development. Actually, thank you to Kim
3 and Tessa. We actually were just interviewed by the
4 Department of Finance as they are prepping their January
5 budget to essentially find out what the impact of early TK
6 has been. They had an interesting set of numbers around
7 access, so it was very helpful to have these at the ready
8 to be able to send these out and also sort of make a very
9 clear case that what has happened in the last two years
10 has essentially stopped the bleeding, but it has not
11 healed LA.

12 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Any other questions?

13 MS. BELSHE: Peter, maybe you or Kim could talk a
14 little bit about how you all are seeing the connection, if
15 not today, in the not too distant future between the
16 detailed policy asks and some of the work that Advancement
17 Project and First 5 LA and others are focusing on here in
18 the county as well as statewide.

19 MS. PATILLO: So there's two sides of that: One
20 is that there is a Sacramento group that is convened by
21 Cal Strat, which I'm guessing you guys have already talked
22 about at good length.

23 MS. BELSHE: To be clear, California Strategy
24 being our consultant, our boots on the ground in
25 Sacramento. As you've heard, they, with our -- at our

1 request, are convening this group. We just want our
2 commissioners to know that's us.

3 MS. PATILLO: Yes. Indeed. It's a way in which
4 I think is very responsive because many of the legislators
5 in these visits have already said, what is this -- I get
6 the problem statement that you were offering, what is the
7 specific ask for this upcoming legislative season. And so
8 this -- at this early stage, it is sort of one step prior
9 to that. The next set of visits, essentially, will happen
10 after the January state of the state comes out. So the
11 Governor sort of shows his hand as to what sort of
12 revenues he is clocking to be realistic. There was a
13 report issued yesterday by the legislative analyst office
14 saying that they are expecting surpluses in the billions
15 until the end of the decade.

16 There is always divergence between where DOF
17 comes in and where the LAO comes in. But what it suggests
18 is, by any measure, there will be -- there will be money
19 to negotiate over in January.

20 So the sort of connective tissue between that
21 group convened by Cal Strat, which is I think going to be
22 articulating and starting to work on the finer and more
23 detailed policy asks, how many seats, of what type of
24 program funding, of what sort of quality investment and
25 what sort of workforce and affordability investments we

1 might have that the -- the through line will basically be
2 connected through grantees who are already working
3 together.

4 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Judy.

5 COMMISSIONER ABDO: I think that it's clear we
6 need more money to go into this field, period. But don't
7 forget the daily rate.

8 MS. PATILLO: Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER ABDO: Because it's not just more
10 money that we need. We need more money per day per child.

11 MS. PATILLO: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER ABDO: We have many more slots and
13 not enough money to run a program. We're not going to
14 solve this problem.

15 MR. BARTH: A reminder to the commission that the
16 framework that this group has always convened under has
17 been access, affordability, and quality, which includes
18 rates, which, you know, a lot of times I think legislators
19 in particular like to say, okay, great, we can serve a
20 thousand more kids, we can serve a thousand more families.
21 The reality is, we're at a situation now where the rate is
22 pegged to such an ancient number that people can't afford
23 to do this anymore.

24 So, actually, at this budget meeting, we invited
25 folks from the Department of Education, from State

1 Department of Education, from the Legislative Analysts
2 Office, and from the Assembly Budget Committee to talk to
3 us and engage with these advocates in a conversation about
4 what are we looking at for the next year. And one of the
5 great turn of events is that the Department of Education
6 has asked. So this is one public message -- I've already
7 shared it with Celia. I'm sharing it with everyone I talk
8 to, that the only data they get for around state preschool
9 is how many people applied and how many people were
10 funded. They are now proactively asking -- and this is a
11 great turn of events -- for any providers who is not
12 applying because the rates are too low to say, we would
13 have applied for a hundred slots if we could have afforded
14 to do it, but we can't do it. So that the Department of
15 Education can go to the legislature next year and say, you
16 know what, we received this many applications, but we
17 would have received applications for an additional 40,000
18 slots -- or whatever the number will end up being -- but
19 we are not paying enough to allow providers to be able to
20 do that.

21 So this is a pretty -- just on that point, this
22 specific project is one piece and I think a really well
23 thought-out piece about how research and data plays into
24 advocacy, about communication plays out into advocacy,
25 about how engaging at the community level, so we're

1 already making the connections between our Best Start
2 communities and this work, come together to make change.
3 And it's one small example, but it fits into the broader
4 context. So the Advancement Project is one of many
5 partners who aren't only talking about the specifics of
6 budget asks or policy asks, but also engaging in a group
7 called the Early Learning Collaborative that's been pulled
8 together by the Packard Foundation and where Kim and I
9 have now had conversations with the funders of Packard
10 about how can we align our efforts to think about bigger
11 policy issues, long-term asks. Okay, it's great that we
12 can have this one-year budget focus, but what about three
13 or four years from now. Do we just want to fund the
14 system that we had in 2007 or do we want to actually build
15 the system we want for children and families.

16 So we're really trying to take this opportunity,
17 which Kim really well laid out, which is the opportunity
18 of the leadership we have, the tenure we'll have in
19 Sacramento, the attention to the issues, and the current
20 economic climate, to say, how do we want to fundamentally
21 build a system we want for children and families rather
22 than just rebuild the one we had before.

23 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Nancy.

24 COMMISSIONER AU: I'm going to ask, again, coming
25 from a purely ignorant perspective. But I'm assuming --

1 and please correct me -- that there are child care
2 providers that are funded primarily by public dollars.
3 And my assumption is that there are equally child care
4 providers that are privately funding, that is by -- and do
5 you have the data as to what the compensation rate is
6 between the two that is, you know, per child allocation?
7 Because then I would have an idea of what the gap is
8 between the AEA or the rate versus the public sector
9 versus the private sector.

10 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Nancy, child care number
11 one is primarily a private system. And a lot of people
12 don't understand that. It is a private system.

13 COMMISSIONER AU: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: 20 percent of all child
15 care is through government dollars. 80 percent is a
16 private market. People like your daughter and your
17 grandchildren, they're the people who are most, you know,
18 the consumers of child care. So there really is a
19 misconception that it is a system for poor people, and
20 it's not. It is primarily a private system.

21 And so I think in this county, it's probably like
22 20, 22 percent of all children in child care are through
23 subsidy where the vast majority are private paying parents
24 like Katie and everybody else. That's how -- that's how
25 it works. And it's expensive.

1 So I really want to say that because there's
2 really this misconception -- misperception, you know. And
3 what government does a lot, they set the rules and
4 regulations. Government is in the practice of licensing
5 and all that kind of stuff. But when you talk about the
6 rates itself, it's a private market system.

7 So if you get child care -- private child care,
8 East LA is going to be far different than private child
9 care in Bel Air. And you could be paying through a
10 private provider. So the community norms -- the private
11 market determines how much you pay for child care.

12 COMMISSIONER AU: So for, again, to have me
13 understand this a whole lot more, I know the dynamics are
14 much more complicated than what I'm envisioning; is that,
15 if Judy's position is that we need to pay attention to the
16 rate, then if all child care is subsidized by 20 percent
17 of public dollars, then who determines what the rate is?
18 And you said Bel Air, the rate is higher versus -- can
19 you --

20 MS. PATILLO: -- concrete example. State
21 preschool providers are paid about \$3,700 per year. TK
22 and transitional kindergarten providers through the K to
23 12 system are now receiving about 9,000 per year for ADA.
24 Depending on the cost of your private child care for a
25 four-year old, you might be paying 7,500 to 1,500 per

1 month per child. So you're up to maybe 15,000 in a
2 private child care system depending on what your price
3 point is that you choose in the private setting.

4 By any measure, the bottom of the reimbursement
5 and sort of cost measure is what the State is paying.

6 COMMISSIONER ABDO: And that's for ten months.
7 There's two months where there's nothing for children.

8 MR. BARTH: And I am not the expert. We have
9 experts at the table and in the room. But there are
10 different rates depending on the setting. There are
11 different rates based on -- and it's calculated using
12 surveys that are conducted every couple of years of
13 different provider rates. And so it's paid. It's call
14 the regional market rate or there's also the standard
15 reimbursement rates. So again, there's different rates
16 depending --

17 MS. BELSHE: Stop showing off.

18 MR. BARTH: No, no, no. I can -- I'm showing you
19 all my cards. Basically, the fundamental punch line here
20 is, there's different rates depending on setting, and
21 that's really challenging. There are different rates
22 based on your region. But then -- but they're all low
23 because they're pegged right now as the State gets to
24 determine which of those surveys they use to determine the
25 rates. So the reimbursement rate survey -- I can't

1 remember what year it is that it's paid at now. 2009.

2 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: 2009.

3 MR. BARTH: 2009. So even though prices have
4 increased, the rates have increased for private providers,
5 providers who accept children who are receiving public
6 subsidy, it is at an artificially low rate. And so one of
7 the big priorities that came out of this discussion is, we
8 need to just catch up to where we are today. And that's
9 why providers are dropping out of the system, why they're
10 no longer volunteering to take the children who most need
11 a quality learning environment.

12 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Okay. Anybody else?
13 Karla, did you have something? And Christina has
14 something to say as well.

15 MS. NIGRELLI: I just wanted to add that, even
16 though we're at 2009 survey, the way that the survey is
17 done has a lot of flaws to it as it is. and it's required
18 by the Feds to do it every two years and then they shelf
19 it and don't use it anyway. But they basically look at
20 what the market is in different zip codes. And in those
21 zip codes, like East LA or zip codes that are very
22 sometime, you know, quite challenging, you're not going to
23 find the market. The market is sub --

24 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: The subsidy makes --
25 decides the rate.

1 MS. NIGRELLI: Right. I would suggest to take it
2 one step further and really kind of challenge the way that
3 the survey is being done, period.

4 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: The poor neighborhood, the
5 subsidy determined the market rate.

6 SPEAKER: -- 2009 survey to a block survey is
7 going to still keep us behind.

8 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Kathy.

9 SPEAKER: I just wanted to put things -- the
10 whole thing with the minimum wage is starting to mess this
11 up even worse because the ECE workers are paid so low.
12 And we tried to get people to see and pay attention to the
13 fact that the rate that's coming up January 1st. The
14 legislators did not take that into consideration in the
15 rate in this new year. So if you fold that in -- I mean,
16 first, you say they should be paid more, but then you say,
17 the law is they're going to have to be paid more and the
18 providers don't have the money to pay them.

19 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Kim, the only thing that I
20 wanted to add is that the Child Care Alliance, the
21 organization I used to be a part of, has had for the last
22 ten years has had a parent voices component, and they've
23 recruited parents and providers to do some of that
24 advocacy. So you may want to talk to Christina at some
25 point in time if you -- if you need parents and providers,

1 I mean, that's part of the alliance has been doing.
2 Christina, can hook you up.

3 Thank you all. Thank you all very much. And I
4 think we have one last agenda item.

5 And, Tara, I think you're on board.

6 MS. FICEK: Me. Yup.

7 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: I was hoping you were going
8 to be here because I can't do this by myself.

9 MS. FICEK: I'll try. All right. Good
10 afternoon, commissioners. As you might recall, staff
11 presented last month our expiring initiative assessment
12 review process for our permanent supportive housing
13 investment, and it included in that presentation this
14 slide which lists out the potential sustainable
15 opportunities to continue that initiative once First 5
16 funding has come to an end, which will be in March of next
17 year, 2016. So we wanted to come back to you today to
18 provide a report on the status of, as you can tell,
19 several kind of moving pieces here over at the county just
20 to pass along the latest information.

21 So we're going to start -- I'm just going to kind
22 of walk through the table. We're going to start with the
23 LA County Homeless Initiative, specifically, that
24 immediate opportunities noted here. You might recall that
25 in mid-October, the county board of supervisors approved a

1 motion that included a \$3 million transfer over to the
2 Community Development Commission, CDC of LA county. That
3 was to augment and extend rapid rehousing for homeless
4 families to avoid any service disruption. So as part of
5 that motion, the CDC needed to complete a report back to
6 the board of supervisors on how those funds would be
7 allocated. And that has been completed since last month's
8 meeting.

9 And we have heard from the CDC. They have passed
10 that report over to the county CEO's office and have
11 shared that those funds will be used to continue funding
12 all of our current First 5 LA rental assistance agencies.
13 And that will take those agencies through June of next
14 year. And, again, that was to avoid any service
15 disruption.

16 And then moving on to the other opportunities
17 here, the other near-term opportunities in regards to the
18 public input sessions that are taking place right now.
19 Those are -- will culminate with a report to the board of
20 supervisors in February. Those are taking place now and,
21 when possible, First 5 LA staff are participating in an
22 effort to not only to track that conversation but also to
23 contribute our input. Actually, I was able to attend a
24 session this morning, and that was on creating an
25 integrated countywide system of rapid rehousing. So when

1 possible, we are participating in those meetings as well.

2 And then the other near-term opportunity here is
3 related to the 1027 board of supervisors motion. And
4 First 5 LA, again, are also tracking the latest activity
5 over at the county related to that and are in close
6 communication with multiple board of supervisors' offices
7 and are contributing to the planning efforts that are
8 under way related to those.

9 So as far as the next steps, we will be bringing
10 back, again, more information on the status of all of
11 these areas back to the board in the spring of next year.
12 And that will be a part of our larger expiring initiatives
13 review process which we always do in the spring of each
14 year anyway. So we will be including again an update on
15 the latest related to the sustainability opportunities for
16 permanent supportive housing.

17 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Is that it?

18 MS. FICEK: That's it.

19 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Way to go, Tara. I'm
20 impressed.

21 MS. FICEK: It's warm in here.

22 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Three-minute presentation.
23 We never get three-minute presentation.

24 Any questions? Suzanne.

25 COMMISSIONER BOSTWICK: Just really for

1 clarification. The \$3 million to CDC, that would go to
2 directly to CDC; it would have nothing to do with First 5
3 whatsoever?

4 MS. FICEK: No. That's immediate and it's going
5 to them now and they have confirmed that those are now
6 going to be allocated to our current providers in an
7 effort -- and it was a part of the motion. That was
8 reason for the motion, to avoid any service disruption
9 knowing that our funding was coming to an end in March.
10 They wanted to continue it through June.

11 COMMISSIONER BOSTWICK: So it's just an
12 additional three months?

13 MS. FICEK: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER BOSTWICK: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Any other questions?

16 Well, Tara, I mean thank you very much. We're
17 getting more and more ready to take action. And I think
18 that action probably will come, you know, in -- in March.
19 And so -- and I feel comfortable that we're at a good
20 point. You know, a lot of commissioners had concerns in
21 mind, and I think this gives us a good -- good place to,
22 you know, follow our own governance policy and move
23 forward. So thank you very much.

24 MS. FICEK: Sure.

25 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Any public comment?

1 SECRETARY: No public comment.

2 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: Therefore, this meeting is
3 adjourned.

4 MS. BELSHE: Whoa, whoa, whoa.

5 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: You told me that.

6 MS. BELSHE: I did tell that you.

7 COMMISSIONER DENNIS: I messed up.

8 MS. BELSHE: This will be 30 seconds.

9 I just want to note a couple of things. One year
10 ago today, the board approved the strategic plan for
11 2015-2020. So let us note happy birthday board approval.
12 Although it didn't take affect until July 1, but it's a
13 great opportunity to reflect upon a lot has happened over
14 the course of a past year, so I just didn't want that to
15 go by.

16 And, finally, what I really want to note is this
17 is the last meeting of this year other than I know the
18 executive committee will have one brief meeting in
19 December. We are not anticipating a December Meeting.
20 Obviously, that's a decision that we will be communicating
21 formally, but we're not expecting it. So I just want to
22 acknowledge that this is about probably -- I should have
23 Linda -- probably the close to 30th meeting we've had when
24 we think about our monthly board meetings, P and P
25 meeting, exec meetings, budget and finance committee

1 meetings. That is an extraordinary investment of
2 commissioner time.

3 And so I want to end by thanking commissioners
4 for your presence, your engagement, your wisdom, your help
5 on so many different fronts. I think this meeting is
6 another example of the value of the conversation and the
7 development, the feedback we get some important work in so
8 many ways.

9 I just want to acknowledge these meetings don't
10 happen, just as you all know who have boards; right? It
11 takes a lot of staff time and effort, both in terms of
12 developing board books as well as presentations and. So I
13 commend the staff for their professionalism and excellent
14 work. And then there's the people we don't necessarily
15 know who really make it all happen. So whether it be Judy
16 Gomez who makes sure that the commissioners have their
17 cookies or Monica Nuno -- Judy gets the applause. Monica
18 Nuno, John's assistant, who helps get things squared away.
19 Karen Valencia, who is relatively new to the executive
20 office who helps keeps things organized.

21 We have Heatherlynn Gonzalez who makes sure that records
22 are kept accurately. But I want to particularly note
23 Linda who, as commission secretary as well as my executive
24 assistant, is really the one who quarterbacks all of these
25 30-plus meetings throughout the year.

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So thank you, commissioners. Thank you, staff.
(Applause).

COMMISSIONER DENNIS: We're going to take two minutes for our transition and then we'll go back into our closed session so we can finish up the presentation from John.

Let's be back there about 4:30.

(At 4:27 P.M. the meeting was adjourned.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Heatherlynn Gonzalez, a Certified Shorthand Reporter for the State of California, License Number 13646, do hereby attest that:

The preceding is a true and accurate transcription of the meeting of the organization named herein;

The meeting was taken down in shorthand and transcribed into English under my supervision and authority;

I have no interest, financial or otherwise, in any of the parties, issues, or individuals who are involved in this organization.

Attested to on this 29th day of November, 2015.

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FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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FIRST 5 LA

SUBJECT:

***Best Start* – Final update of the 2013-2015 Building Stronger Families Framework Implementation Plan**

BACKGROUND:

In June 2013, the Board endorsed the Building Stronger Families Framework (BSFF), which was designed to provide greater focus to *Best Start* community capacity building efforts. The BSFF is grounded in the family strengthening “protective factors” and asserts that if families are strong and communities support families to succeed, then children will have better outcomes. Central to the BSFF are the following family and community core results:

Family-level:

1. Families capacities – knowledgeable, resilient and nurturing parents
2. Social connections – families participating in positive social networks
3. Concrete supports – access to services and supports that meet family needs

Community-level:

4. Coordinated services and supports that meet family needs
5. Common vision and collective action to improve communities and support families
6. Social networks and safe places that promote healthy living and encourage interaction

With the approval of the BSFF Implementation Plan in November 2013, the Board authorized staff to move forward with an implementation approach which outlined five programmatic elements to advance the core results. The plan covered the last 18 months of the FY2009-2015 Strategic Plan (January 2014-June 2015). This memo, attached materials, and presentation provide information on the accomplishments and lessons learned from these 18 months of BSFF implementation.

DISCUSSION:

Best Start is a place-based, community building approach to engaging parents, residents, organizations and other stakeholders in sustained collaborative efforts to improve the policies, systems, and environments that impact families’ ability to thrive. The implementation of the BSFF is based on an acknowledgement that “...a combination of individual, relational, community and societal factors must be addressed in order to promote healthy child, adult and family wellbeing and to reduce the risk of negative outcomes.”¹ In other words, there are various social, economic, and structural forces at work in communities that can become obstacles and make it difficult for families to thrive. The purpose of *Best Start* is to galvanize parents, residents, organizations, and systems to minimize these forces and create a community context in which parents have the support they need to strengthen the relationships and behaviors that promote optimal child development.

To realize this purpose, the BSFF Implementation Plan outlined five elements to advance the six core results. These include:

1. Integration of Family Strengthening, Systems Improvement, and Community Capacity Building (*as described in the FY2009-2015 Strategic Plan*)

¹ Browne, Charlyn Harper. (2014). *The Strengthening Families Approach and protective Factors Framework: Branching Out and Reaching Deeper* (pp. 16-17). Center of the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved from: http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2014/The-Strengthening-Families-Approach-and-Protective-Factors-Framework_Branching-Out-and-Reaching-Deeper.pdf

2. *Best Start* Community Partnerships to advance the core results
3. Assessing Progress: Learning & Accountability Framework
4. Marketing and Communications
5. First 5 LA Internal Capacity and Systems of Support

Through the implementation of these BSFF elements, First 5 LA experienced accomplishments, challenges, and valuable lessons about the investment of time, resources, and staff to build the capacity of multiple stakeholders to work collectively around a shared vision for children, families and communities. Attachment A is a synopsis of the accomplishments and lessons learned from each of these elements.

A key component of BSFF implementation was First 5 LA's investment in a developmental evaluation approach used to embed continuous learning and adaptation into the implementation process and capture the evolution of *Best Start* in a rapidly changing context. As a learning organization, First 5 LA anticipated many lessons about how to effectively manage and support place-based, community building efforts. Developmental evaluation helped to increase First 5 LA's knowledge of its role in supporting and/or inhibiting the implementation of BSFF. Attachment B is the final developmental evaluation report submitted by Harder & Co in October 2015.

Although the BSFF Implementation Plan sunset in June 2015, the Board reaffirmed its commitment to *Best Start* and the BSFF with the approval of the FY2015-2020 Strategic Plan. The Communities Outcome area emphasizes the three community core results, while the Families Outcome area focuses on strengthening family protective factors. Therefore, the framework and key components of the plan (e.g. Community Partnerships) continue with refinements based on key lessons learned as discussed in Attachments A and B.

Furthermore, First 5 LA's emphasis on policy and systems change provides greater clarity and focus to *Best Start* as a capacity building strategy to promote and sustain community change. This emphasis, in addition to the experience and developments gained from the current support structure for the Community Partnerships, positions and informs how best to strengthen the new work of *Best Start* within the FY2015-2020 Strategic Plan for the long term. Staff will provide periodic updates to the Board on the progress of this important investment.

Building Stronger Families Framework 2013-2015 Implementation Plan

Presentation to the
Board of Commissioners
Program & Planning Committee
January 28, 2016



First5LA.org

Presentation Objectives

1. Provide a final report on the 2013-2015 Building Stronger Families Framework (BSFF) Implementation Plan.
2. Discuss the key insights from the implementation outcomes that have informed the FY2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

What is *Best Start*?

Best Start is a place-based, community capacity building approach to engaging parents, residents, organizations and other stakeholders in sustained collaborative efforts to improve the policies, systems and environments that impact families' ability to thrive.

Best Start Communities

- Broadway-Manchester
- Central Long Beach
- Compton/East Compton
- East LA
- El Monte/South El Monte
- Lancaster
- Metro LA
- Northeast Valley (Pacoima)
- Palmdale
- Panorama City
- Southeast LA
- Watts-Willowbrook
- West Athens
- Wilmington

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How Does Best Start Work?

Best Start builds community capacity to promote policy and systems change.

Community Capacity Building

- Collaborative efforts that engage and support residents is essential to success.
- Relationships within a community are important for family and community wellbeing.
- Improving community structures and building social capital are both important to transform communities.
- Ongoing mobilization of community assets (people, structures, resources) is critical for sustainability.



Systems Change

- Organizations and communities working better together
- Improving how services and supports are delivered.
- Changing people's attitudes and behaviors.
- Putting new practices and safeguards in place to protect families.
- Offering better services and programs.

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Building Stronger Families Framework (BSFF)

Six Core Results



Family capacities – knowledgeable, resilient and nurturing parents



Social connections – families participating in positive social networks



Concrete supports – access to services and supports in times of need



Coordinated services and supports that meet family needs



Common vision and collective will to strengthen families



Social networks and safe spaces for recreation and interaction

About the BSFF: Focusing Best Start

- Developed and approved in 2013, it provides a theory of change for a sharper, strategic focus to *Best Start*
- Is grounded in the family strengthening “protective factors”
- Reflects and extensive body of evidence about the conditions that need to be present in families and communities to improve child outcomes
- Balances the need for clear results to advance First 5 LA’s goals with the importance of community-informed and led strategies and activities

About the BSFF: Focusing Best Start



- Emphasizes engagement of parents as decision-makers, not clients
- Highlights the need for a shared vision and collective action between parents, residents, organizations, public officials,¹⁶³ businesses, funders, and other stakeholders
- Requires ongoing reflection and learning to build capacity

BSFF Implementation Plan

Five Elements to Advance BSFF Core Results (2013-2015)



Integration of family strengthening, systems improvement and community capacity building



Best Start **Community Partnerships**



Assessing Progress: Learning & Accountability Framework



Marketing & Communications



First 5 LA Internal Capacity & **Systems of Support**

Key Outcome Examples Per Element



- First 5 LA and DMH worked collaboratively to leverage investments in Best Start and Health Neighborhoods. Seven *Best Start* communities have been identified as Health Neighborhoods.



- Investments in broad resident engagement through SBCC Thrive LA's Resident Outreach Coordinators resulted in 1,191 additional residents involved in *Best Start*.



- First 5 LA implemented quarterly “Learning Communities” to promote peer learning across the 14 communities.



- Several Partnerships conducted their own communications projects, such as the Business Engagement pilot and a *Ready for Kinder* book being distributed at libraries and across *Best Start* communities.



- Lessons learned and ongoing feedback and reflection about the current support structure for the Community Partnerships are informing the design of a long-term support structure, which is currently being vetted with Community Partnerships and other stakeholders

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Key Lessons & Insights

- Opportunities for learning and reflection build community and staff capacity to facilitate community change efforts.
- Effective management of *Best Start* requires flexibility and a commitment to listen, learn, respond, and adapt.
- *Best Start* has created opportunities to strengthen social connections and collaboration within the Community Partnerships and the broader community. ¹⁶⁶
- Community members are eager to lead and assume more ownership over the community building process.
- Frequent communication and community input are critical to initiative development and the success of implementation.
- The implementation of BSFF has provided an important foundation to the future sustainability of the *Best Start*.

BSFF in the FY2015-2020 Strategic Plan

- *Best Start* community capacity building as an anchor investment to promote policy and systems change
- Six core results embedded into the Families and Communities Outcome areas
 - ✓ Families Outcome Area – protective factors
 - ✓ Communities Outcome Area – shared vision/collective action, coordinated services and supports, and physical places and spaces

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Next Steps

- Continue implementation of the community-identified projects
 - 11 were approved by the Board in 2015 and remaining 3 will go before the Board for approval in February and March 2016
- Implement a Board engagement process around the long-term support structure for *Best Start*
- Provide periodic Board updates on progress in the Communities Outcome area

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Questions?

1ST  LA
first 5 la
Giving kids the best start

Final Report: Lessons Learned from the 2013-2015 Building Stronger Families Framework Implementation Plan

January 2016



Best Start is about **strengthening communities**. It is a place-based, community building approach to engaging parents, caregivers, residents, organizations and other stakeholders in sustained collaborative efforts to improve the policies, systems and environments that impact families' ability to thrive. Through *Best Start*, First 5 LA is building a family-centered movement by supporting existing community strengths and providing the space for connection, collaboration, learning, and leadership.



Best Start is about **people**. It is an investment in the people in neighborhoods to promote and drive community and systems change. It is about strengthening local leadership, fostering social connections, and promoting collaboration. It is about people with various lived experiences all coming together around a shared vision and acting collectively to reduce barriers and mobilize community assets and resources so that families have the support they need to strengthen relationships and behaviors that promote optimal child development.

Best Start is about **results**. The Board's endorsement of the Building Stronger Families Framework (BSFF) in June 2013 brought greater focus to the work of *Best Start*. Grounded in the family strengthening "protective factors," the BSFF outlines six core results:

Family-level:

- Families capacities — knowledgeable, resilient and nurturing parents
- Social connections — families participating in positive social networks
- Concrete supports — access to services and supports that meet family needs

Community-level:

- Coordinated services and supports that meet family needs
- Common vision and collective action to improve communities and support families
- Social networks and safe places that promote healthy living and encourage interaction

Best Start is about **action that matters**. In November 2013, the Commission approved the BSFF Implementation Plan to move from planning to strategic action in the last 18-months of the FY2009–2015 Strategic Plan. Emphasis was placed on five implementation elements: 1) integration, 2) Community Partnerships, 3) learning and accountability, 4) marketing and communications, and 5) systems of support. Together, these implementation elements were

designed to galvanize people around a multitude of actions to achieve results that will build a community’s capacity to create and sustain thriving, healthy environments for all children.

*Best Start is about **learning, reflection and improvement**.* Every opportunity to learn is an opportunity to improve. Because communities are complex, dynamic systems, First 5 LA and community members must be able to adapt and recalibrate strategies, activities and perspectives to achieve results in a rapidly changing environment. From January 2014–June 2015, First 5 LA experienced accomplishments, challenges and valuable lessons learned about what it takes to build the capacity of multiple stakeholders — including First 5 LA itself – to work collectively around a shared vision for children, families, and communities. It is in this spirit of learning, reflection and improvement that this final report of the 2013-2015 BSFF Implementation Plan provides an overview of each of BSFF implementation elements, accomplishments, lessons learned, and how those lessons have served as foundational pieces to First 5 LA’s current Strategic Plan.



element #1

Integration of Agency Strategies: Family Strengthening, Systems Improvement and Community Capacity Building

What This Means

First 5 LA made a concerted effort to align its agency strategies with the BSFF believing that when resources are aligned and working together, then greater opportunities exist to improve communities and the systems that impact children and their families. As part of aligning its investments, **First 5 LA cultivated leveraging opportunities among other investments** and also took steps to ensure community voice had a stronger role in informing the planning and assessment of activities implemented in *Best Start* communities.



Accomplishments

- **21 Select Home Visitation programs were launched** and *Best Start* Community Partnerships participated in their selection process. The Partnerships also now receive regular updates about the programs, as well as about Welcome Baby.
- **Partnerships provided input in the design of First 5 LA's Tot Parks and Trails** and other park projects within the *Best Start* Communities. Some also drew attention to park openings by developing complimentary resource fairs at the site.
- **First 5 LA, the Partnerships, and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) worked together** to identify leveraging opportunities to pursue through DMH's Health Neighborhoods Initiative.
- **Partnerships made important connections** to others involved in First 5 LA's strategies, including Welcome Baby hospitals, home visitation programs, Neighborhood Action Councils and Parent Peer Support Groups
- **The Neighborhood Action Councils adopted the BSFF**, aligned their efforts to the core results, and, in many cases, are working collaboratively with the Community Partnerships to implement projects.
- **First 5 LA partnered with community members to cultivate a deep understanding of the core results** and what it means for their communities. They developed strategies and activities to advance the core results and worked with First 5 LA to fund community building initiatives that will implement this work. (Additional information is included in Element #2)
- **The BSFF core results became key components of the outcomes and priority areas** of First 5 LA's new 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

Lessons Learned

Integration starts with sharing knowledge and information. *Best Start* gave community members the opportunity to learn about First 5 LA's other investments, how they were supporting neighborhood families and how to connect to these resources themselves. The process also gave us the opportunity **to incorporate community voice into planning and implementation of First 5 LA investments.** During the BSFF implementation period, opportunities emerged to have community members give suggestions and feedback on investments such as Tot Parks and Trials, Welcome Baby, Select Home Visitation, Peer Support Groups, and the P-5 Workforce Competencies. As a result, these investments have become stronger by designing work that better reflects the interest and needs of the community, and more community members have become invested in the success of First 5 LA's projects and programs. First 5 LA also learned what happens when community voice is not incorporated. Community members raised concerns about some of the agencies decisions, such as the sunseting of facilitator contracts in June 2015. While contracting and program support decisions must be made by First 5 LA staff and Commission, the community concern brought to light the need for First 5 LA to be more transparent about how we as a public entity are governed by a robust set of policies and procedures. Also, that parameters around decision-making authority are critical to gain trust and position First 5 LA as a true community partner.

Moving Forward

Based on lessons learned, **First 5 LA is more intentional about sharing information and incorporating community voice as early as possible when initiatives, projects and strategies are being designed and decisions are being made.** This is especially important since parents and caregivers are at the center of the First 5 LA's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. Ongoing efforts to ensure greater coordination and integration — coupled with community voice — will strengthen new strategies in the areas of Families, Communities, and Systems all the more, as they, together, support the success of parents and caregivers, and create the systems change we need to ensure that all children in L.A. County enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life.



element #2

Best Start Community Partnerships

What This Means

First 5 LA **focuses on strengthening the capacities of the 14 Best Start Community Partnerships**, which are charged with creating and championing a community change agenda to **improve outcomes for young children**. These capacities include utilizing data to assess progress in activities and make informed decisions, planning and tracking actions focused on advancing the core results, and building broad support for a collective vision that comes primarily from parent and resident leadership.



Accomplishments

- **Partnerships developed capacity-building plans** to build upon strengths and address weaknesses. These include activities and training in areas such as membership diversity, communications and governance.
- **Partnership members built relationships and shared best practices** by participating in “Learning Communities,” which were quarterly meetings that brought all 14 Best Start Communities together.
- **There was increased resident engagement** due to the addition of Resident Outreach Coordinators to assist in informing the broader community about Best Start, as well as more intentional relationship-building with the Neighborhood Action Councils.

As a result, nearly 1,200 additional parents and residents have become involved in Best Start, and 89 informal community connection groups have formed, where parents support each other around topics and interests that matter to them, such as nutrition, parenting, and school readiness.

- **Partnerships experienced a collaborative planning process** through Learning by Doing, which provided the opportunity to prioritize issues and make decisions based on data and collective knowledge, and to identify and select project activities that are now being funded by First 5 LA to advance the core results.

Lessons Learned

The key lessons learned revolve around **openness to learning and adapting, willingness to build stronger relationships to foster stronger collaboration**, willingness to promote and support community ownership. Based on community feedback, First 5 LA adapted by slowing its implementation pace to providing structured opportunities for all those involved to reflect, to engage in a deeper dialogue and to make responsive adjustments, which resulted in greater learning and relationship-building. The relationship-building aspect was especially important, as community members will need strong bonds and networks in order to collaborate on systems change. In addition, as *Best Start* built the leadership skills of Partnership members, **the need for clarity on decision-making powers and roles became more urgent**. Members wanted to do more, but felt hindered by First 5 LA's policies and processes, as well as by programmatic shifts that lacked community input. First 5 LA is addressing this by creating more opportunities to dialogue with the community, and by continuing to work on a company culture of transparency.

Moving Forward

Building the capacity of the Partnerships is establishing a strong foundation for systems change. It has strengthened the confidence and communications skills of members and increased social connections and relationships among them so that they may advocate for themselves and their communities. In order for this growth to continue, the Partnerships need a more autonomous infrastructure that promotes community ownership and decision-making power than the current one allows. As such, First 5 LA is developing a long-term support structure for *Best Start*, which will be presented to the Commission in March 2016. In addition, the Building Stronger Families projects funded through the Learning by Doing process will continue to be implemented, and the development of performance measures to track progress is now underway.



element #3

Assessing Progress: Learning & Accountability Framework

What This Means

First 5 LA utilized a developmental evaluation approach to *Best Start*. This engaged an evaluation team to play the role of strategic partners and facilitators in each *Best Start* community who could foster continuous sharing, learning and reflection among staff, contractors and Partnership members. The developmental evaluators were responsible for: compiling and distributing community-specific data to inform the decision-making and actions taken by the Partnerships; providing ongoing feedback and reports; and assessing the progress of the Partnerships.



Accomplishments

- **Partnerships had ready access to data and indicators** that enabled them to make informed choices throughout their Learning By Doing experience.
- Rather than being “subjects” of evaluation, **the Partnerships were able to work equally with the evaluators in meeting their goals**, improving their processes along the way without fear of being judged or criticized. This enabled learning on both sides.
- **Staff, contractors and Partnership members got rapid feedback** as steps were implemented that improved discussions and enabled *Best Start* to alter course and be responsive to problems in its next steps.
- **The developmental evaluation final report documents a great deal of community feedback and concerns**, including race and power dynamics, transparency and communication, which will inform the future activities and structure of *Best Start*.

Lessons Learned

As with other place-based initiatives, **Best Start showed itself to be ever-changing and evolving**, making developmental evaluation a much more useful approach than traditional evaluation. Having on-site developmental evaluators as part of a Partnership’s Learning Team **enabled Best Start to be responsive to uncertainty and address emerging issues in a rapidly changing environment**. It also provided the context for understanding that intent cannot always be implemented in the way it is first imagined, and so it freed staff to adjust work plans when there were unintended outcomes, while maintaining the integrity of the focus on advancing the core results.

Moving Forward

First 5 LA will develop a responsive evaluation approach for Best Start under its 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, incorporating the developmental evaluation report’s learnings and recommendations.



element #4

Marketing & Communications

What This Means

First 5 LA worked to increase the level of awareness of parents and other stakeholders about the activities of the Partnerships and their work to address the core results. They also built the capacity of Partnership members through communications workgroups and training sessions to help them develop messages, identify and utilize a variety of communications streams, and strengthen partnerships with stakeholders.



Accomplishments

- **Partnership members were better able to communicate the core results** and their work in *Best Start* after participating in trainings on messaging, social media and writing. This also enabled them to develop their own materials, including community-specific brochures, fliers and promotional items.
- **Several Partnerships conducted their own communications projects**, including a Business Engagement Pilot, where members built relationships with local businesses and became involved with the Chamber of Commerce, and a Ready for Kinder book, which is being distributed at libraries and across *Best Start* communities.
- Through a community sponsorship process, **Partnership members were able to evaluate funding proposals** and have significant discussions about what kinds of activities can address the core results and impact the broader community. This also enabled them to strengthen relationships with local agencies and extend the *Best Start* reach to their audiences.
- **Facebook pages were established for all 14 communities**, with community members being coached to manage postings.
- **Community feedback provided the foundation for First 5 LA's new Surround campaign**, which will encourage parents across L.A. County to seek local resources and build social connections.

Lessons Learned

Communications capacity building is a critical component for Partnerships to be able to advocate for systems change, and requires more resources than anticipated (e.g. additional training in a number of communications areas). **Members said they found their voice and felt supported in giving their opinion**, and want to do more work on developing a unified *Best Start* message and orientation materials for new Partnership attendees. Also, **messages are communicated and resonate best with community when they are developed by community members themselves**. Much of the BSFF was complex and difficult to learn, so in order to create community-wide support of the core results, *Best Start* had to allow members to define the concepts in their own terms and with their personal stories.

Moving Forward

First 5 LA will continue to support communications capacity-building in the *Best Start* Communities, including social media and public speaking training. In addition, First 5 LA will continue to conduct countywide awareness-raising and educational campaigns such as the Surround Campaign that promote the core results and protective factors.



element #5

First 5 LA Internal Capacity and Systems of Support

What This Means

First 5 LA provides the infrastructure support for the Partnerships with the intent to help build relationships, trust, social connections and a collective will among members. As such, First 5 LA's staffing, values, policies and practices affect *Best Start* in different ways and have a direct impact on the ability of the Partnerships to carry out activities that advance the core results.



Accomplishments

- **The current support structure facilitated the ability of community members to build their social connections and their knowledge** of the core results by providing capacity-building contractors and facilitators, as well as logistics such as meeting space, refreshments, translation, child care and transportation.
- **Staff and contractors built their own capacity:** increasing their knowledge about the protective factors and place-based work; learning flexibility and adaptability; improving organizing and communications skills; and streamlining their own processes in order to address community needs.
- **Community feedback on power dynamics and the limitations** that First 5 LA has as a public agency laid the groundwork for the development of a new *Best Start* infrastructure that is being discussed with the Partnerships.

Lessons Learned

As a learning organization, **First 5 LA anticipated many lessons about how to effectively manage and support place-based, community change efforts.** The developmental evaluation approach helped First 5 LA to understand its role in supporting or inhibiting capacity-building efforts, enabling the agency to identify problems quickly and learn to adapt.

Some of these lessons included understanding how First 5 LA's organizational structure and its assumptions about what it takes to effect community change do not always align with what the community needs. First 5 LA had to overcome perceptions of administering a “top-down” approach and learn to be more transparent and communicative about its complex processes and policies. There is also a struggle with the concept of community ownership, which ultimately speaks to *Best Start's* vision of sustainability for the Partnerships. Achieving this vision requires clarity around who makes decisions and on what issues, and how First 5 LA as a funder—but a public agency—can create more opportunities for the Partnership members to have this power.

Moving Forward

First 5 LA has developed a new long-term support structure for the Partnerships that will be presented to the Commission in March 2016. This structure will allow for more autonomy for the Partnerships and for *Best Start* staff to focus more on systems change as outlined in the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.





OCTOBER 2015

Developmental Evaluation
(February 2014-July 2015)

BEST START FINAL LEARNING REPORT

KEY FINDINGS & REFLECTIONS



“ I AM BEST START. WE ARE THE AGENTS OF CHANGE. BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES STARTS WITH ME. ”
~ PARTNERSHIP MEMBER

BEST START FINAL LEARNING REPORT

KEY FINDINGS & REFLECTIONS



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Report Prepared
for First 5 LA

By Harder+Company
Community Research
and Special Service
for Groups (SSG)

October 2015

This final report is part of a developmental evaluation of First 5 LA's place-based approach known as Best Start. It highlights cross-cutting lessons, strategies, and emerging practices. It is based on evaluative observations, interviews, reflective sessions, and focus groups with First 5 LA staff, contractors, and community members from the 14 Best Start Communities. This report is designed to promote continuous learning and reflection in ways that shape and inform future strategies, collective problem solving, and decision-making.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

First 5 LA is a leading early childhood advocate working collaboratively across Los Angeles County to ensure that every child enters kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. Through Best Start, First 5 LA focuses on building supportive environments where children and families can thrive in 14 communities across the county. While many of these communities face critical issues such as poverty, unemployment, and high teen birth rates, each has a strong network of local leaders and nonprofit organizations dedicated to making a difference. First 5 LA works in partnership with these networks to promote a common vision and collective will throughout each community that will give kids the best start in life.

The Evolving Field of Place-based Initiatives

Over the last several decades, complex place-based initiatives have gained momentum in addressing the needs of vulnerable communities, including health disparities, poor education, unemployment, obesity, and unaffordable housing. The underlying assumption of focusing on a “place” is that the unique characteristics of a place or neighborhood influence the health and well-being of the individuals who live there. Place-based initiatives examine the complex interconnections of the social issues operating within a particular area. Because the contexts of neighborhoods vary by social issues and socioeconomic factors, including the amount of resources and systemic infrastructures in place, adapting strategies and interventions to the unique features of any given “place” is essential to community change.

Aspen Institute. (1999). “Voices from the Field: Learning from the Early Work of Comprehensive Community Initiatives.” Washington, DC

Since its inception, First 5 LA’s place-based initiative has focused on engaging community partners, creating governance structures, and developing a shared vision to create safe and healthy communities where young children and families can thrive. Despite the wealth of knowledge and experience generated by funders and community advocates across the country, there is no playbook for implementing and managing a publicly funded place-based initiative as large and complex as Best Start. Given the dynamic nature of this work, First 5 LA opted to implement a developmental evaluation (DE) to help uncover what’s working and what needs to be refined to improve results. This report documents the progress of the Best Start initiative (including challenges, promising strategies and major milestones) and surfaces the most salient, timely, and usable findings in ways that inform ongoing learning. It highlights key lessons and insights from February 2014 to July 2015 and is informed by observations, focus groups, and interviews with diverse stakeholders working in all 14 Best Start Communities.



KEY FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Place-based initiatives are – at their core – an iterative process of learning that allows all stakeholders to test theories, deepen relationships and build capacity to realize collective goals.² The last 18 months have generated considerable lessons about what it takes to manage a large place-based initiative as well as foster increased capacity building and ownership at the community level. Key takeaways, milestones, and opportunities for growth are organized around three main themes outlined below and further detailed in the full report.

¹ <http://www.first5la.org/index.php?r=site/tag&cid=576>

² Based on Literature Review conducted by Harder+Company (Nov 2011). “185 Practices in Place-based Initiatives: Implications for Implementation and Evaluation of Best Start.” In collaboration with Prudence Brown (national place-based consultant) and Juarez and Associates (Nov. 2011)

Learning and Adapting

THE PROCESS OF
LEARNING AND
ADAPTING

reflect

discuss

adapt

ACTION

- Structured opportunities to reflect and learn builds capacity and promotes shared vision:** The process of learning and adapting requires an intentional approach with structured opportunities to discuss, reflect, and translate learning into action.³ For Best Start, creating a learning environment was not an easy task and required a shift in practice and a commitment to honest and transparent dialogue. During the last 18 months, First 5 LA created structures for learning and reflection (such as gatherings and interactive reflective sessions) and worked to engage in deeper dialogue with the community. The full report highlights promising examples of community partners, contractors, and First 5 LA taking the time to reflect and use lessons to recalibrate strategies and turn learning into collective action. First 5 LA should continue to be intentional in incorporating reflective practice and evaluative thinking into its work. Dedicating time to reflect can help bring renewed clarity and direction to complex and ever-evolving community change efforts. Likewise, designating time in Community Partnerships meetings to build relationships and promote learning, while being responsive and adaptive to diverse learning styles, is also essential.⁴ It is also critical to make sure learning and reflection is translated into shared knowledge, improved practice, and actionable solutions within First 5 LA and in the Best Start Communities.⁵
- Effective management of Best Start requires flexibility and a commitment to listen, learn, respond, and adapt:** The implementation of place-based efforts is intrinsically influenced by a funder’s structure, organizational culture and assumptions about what it takes to affect community change. The Best Start experience underscored the need for flexible structures and processes that focus on learning and transparency as well as clear, honest, and continuous communication with community stakeholders. During the last 18 months, structural constraints within the organization created barriers and frustration among Best Start stakeholders, but clear attempts were made to respond to community feedback and make adjustments to approaches, strategies, and practices. This included more open and deeper



³ Ibid

⁴ Meehan, D., Casteneda, N., & Salvesen, A. (2011). “The Role of Leadership in Place-based Initiatives.” Report prepared for The California Endowment by the Leadership Learning Community. Available at: www.leadershiplearning.org.

⁵ Based on Literature Review conducted by Harder+Company (Nov 2011). “Best Practices in Place-based Initiatives: Implications for Implementation and Evaluation of Best Start.” In collaboration with Prudence Brown (national place-based consultant) and Juarez and Associates (Nov. 2011)

Key Learning and Evaluation Questions

- **Learning and Adapting:** How is the Best Start initiative evolving? What have the Community Partnerships and First 5 LA learned in the past 18 months and how is this learning being used to adapt, strengthen, and focus efforts?
- **Strengthening Social Connections and Collaboration:** Who is at the table? How are Community Partnerships strengthening their networks and social connections? How are Best Start partners collaborating and working together?
- **Building Capacity and Fostering Community Ownership:** How are Community Partnerships building their capacity to lead and own the community change process? How are they advocating for more favorable policies, resources, and services for young children, families, and the communities where they live?



dialogue with Community Partnership members at quarterly learning communities as well as the engagement of a community transition team to serve as liaisons and support communications between Community Partnerships and First 5 LA's management of Best Start. First 5 LA's operational structure was complex and confusing for some community members. Many Best Start participants wanted to better understand how decisions were made and where there were opportunities to influence process, decisions, and practices. First 5 LA should continue to explore opportunities to demystify the organization's

structure and help develop the skills of residents and parents to effectively engage with First 5 LA and other public institutions. In addition, stakeholders identified the need to improve both internal (within First 5 LA) and external communications and suggested that more needs to be done to communicate in transparent, consistent, and nontechnical ways.

Strengthening Social Connections and Collaboration

- **Opportunities to strengthen connections and collaboration are critical ingredients for building and sustaining the work of Best Start:** Best Start is about community building and seeks to harness the energy of community stakeholders to act collectively and improve outcomes for young children, families, and the communities where they live. While participation in Best Start has ebbed and flowed over time, the last 18 months revealed the power and potential of social connections and collaboration within Community Partnerships and the broader community. Partnership members formed stronger bonds, extended and diversified their networks, and provided social support to individuals and families who had been socially isolated. They also connected and collaborated with other community efforts and networked across the 14 Best Start Communities to support and extend the vision of Best Start. While community members deepened their skills and knowledge about community needs and solutions, more can be done to extend capacity building opportunities beyond a small core group of emerging leaders. Moving forward, community members will also benefit from the ability to advocate and effectively engage with formal institutions and organizations. This will help broaden their social networks to include other stakeholders, supporters, and organizational partners that help advance the work. Finally, more can be done to help partnerships effectively leverage their networks and connect with other organizations, funding streams, and resources that share similar community or systems change agendas.

Building Capacity and Fostering Community Ownership

- Leadership development and decision-making guidelines are key ingredients for community ownership:** Best Start placed emphasis on engaging community members and building their capacity to advocate, participate in decision-making, build leadership skills, and engage in collective efforts to improve their communities. While capacity building is a long-term endeavor, during the last 18 months community members strengthened their skills and capacity to make data-informed decisions, co-design and co-lead meetings and planning processes, and to respectfully engage in difficult conversations with stakeholders who have diverse and divergent points of view. They also engaged in collective efforts ranging from events that improved community parks to working with local officials to improve relations and advocate for resources. During the past year, the concept of community ownership has been a hot topic among Best Start stakeholders. Community ownership can mean different things to different people and is complicated by tensions about who has the power, resources, influence, and authority to determine priorities and make decisions. Stakeholders expressed the need to clarify opportunities for Best Start Communities to *influence* decisions and opportunities to actually *make* them. More conversation and clarity is needed to help stakeholders better understand evolving roles, accountability structures, and by whom and how decisions are made. Finally, the literature acknowledges the importance of discussing race, equity and power in place-based initiatives. Addressing these significant inequities in marginalized communities requires many honest and uncomfortable conversations that take considerable facilitation skills. As difficult as the conversations may be, several Best Start stakeholders expressed that this capacity building area is essential to creating sustainable and positive community change.

Throughout this evaluation, the developmental evaluation team worked with diverse stakeholders to elevate key learnings and collectively interpret and make meaning of the many challenges, lessons, and achievements. It was a journey marked by transition, adaptation, and growth on multiple levels. This report highlights how First 5 LA and the Best Start Communities have learned and adapted through critical reflection; how social connections and collaboration have led to stronger networks and collective action; and how the Best Start Communities have increased their capacity to lead and own efforts to make their communities safe and healthy places for young children to grow and thrive.



INTRODUCTION

BROADWAY-
MANCHESTER

CENTRAL
LONG BEACH

COMPTON-
EAST COMPTON

EAST
LOS ANGELES

LANCASTER

METRO LA

NORTHEAST
VALLEY

PALMDALE

PANORAMA CITY

SOUTHEAST LA
COUNTY CITIES

SOUTH EL MONTE/
EL MONTE

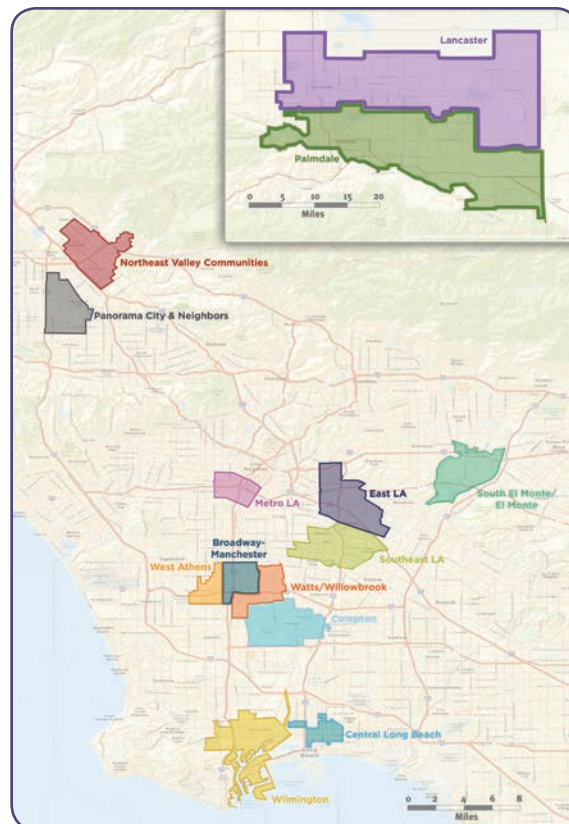
WEST ATHENS

WATTS-
WILLOWBROOK

WILMINGTON

Best Start is a place-based initiative of First 5 LA designed to improve the well-being of children and families in 14 communities across Los Angeles County. While all of these communities face critical challenges such as poverty, unemployment and high teen pregnancy rates, each has a strong network of local leaders and nonprofit organizations committed to making their communities a better place to live. Through Best Start, First 5 LA partners with parents and caregivers, residents, organizations, businesses, government institutions, and other stakeholders to promote a shared vision and collective will to create vibrant communities where young children and their families can thrive.⁶

Since the inception of Best Start in 2010, considerable time and energy have been invested in engaging diverse stakeholders, building trusting relationships, developing capacity, and creating the structures and processes to effectively engage in collective action. In early 2014, First 5 LA introduced several new and pivotal elements to help bring greater clarity and strengthen the overall work of Best Start. This included the introduction of a developmental evaluation that was designed to facilitate continuous learning and better understand what it takes to achieve results in a complex community change initiative.



First 5 LA
Best Start Communities

■	Broadway-Manchester
■	Central Long Beach
■	Compton
■	East LA
■	Lancaster
■	Metro LA
■	Northeast Valley Communities
■	Palmdale
■	Panorama City & Neighbors
■	Southeast LA
■	South El Monte/El Monte
■	Watts/Willowbrook
■	West Athens
■	Wilmington



THE EVOLVING NATURE OF BEST START

In early 2014, First 5 LA formally introduced the Building Stronger Families Framework (BSFF) which is based on the belief that families are central to ensuring that children are healthy, safe and prepared for school. It also recognizes that families thrive in the context of communities that provide them with support, services and opportunities to connect with one another.⁷ In addition to the BSFF, First 5 LA introduced a variety of other processes, structures and supports (described below) to advance capacity building efforts in the 14 Best Start Communities (BSCs). The Learning By Doing (LBD) process was implemented in early 2014 and was designed to lead Community Partnerships through the decision-making stages that ultimately lead to results-focused activities that strengthen families and their communities. LBD is an iterative process that allows all stakeholders to adjust and refine their strategies while deepening their relationships and building capacity for effective implementation. In the context of Best Start, the LBD process consisted of five main stages including: 1) choosing a family core result, 2) gathering the story behind the data, 3) choosing the target population, 4) identifying and choosing appropriate activities and strategies, and 5) implementing activities and tracking progress. As of the writing of this report, all 14 communities participated in this iterative process and are implementing or preparing to implement specific strategies in their respective communities.⁸ Both the BSFF and LBD process represented a pivotal shift in First 5 LA's place-based work with the goal of helping stakeholders better understand the complexity of community issues by focusing on results.

Building Stronger Families Framework (BSFF)

In 2014, First 5 LA began the rollout phase of the BSFF in the 14 Best Start Communities. With a six month investment of \$4.9 million, the plan emphasizes six family and community-level core results including:

- Family capacities – knowledgeable, resilient and nurturing parents
- Social connections – families participating in positive social networks
- Concrete supports – access to services and support that meet families' needs
- Coordinated services and supports that meet families' needs
- A common vision and collective will to strengthen families
- Social networks and safe spaces for recreation and interaction

⁷ From Commission meeting notes (June 26, 2013). <http://www.first5la.org/files/BestStartFrameworkRetreatPowerpoint.pdf>

⁸ See appendix A for an overview of the 14 Best Start Communities' core results and strategies.

In addition to introducing the new framework and LBD process, several other key components and players were introduced in early 2014. These new contributors joined an existing group of Best Start staff and community facilitators who had been supporting the 14 Community Partnerships since 2010. In the years leading up to this shift, each community had been working to engage members and build support, develop and strengthen their governance structures, and better understand community needs and assets. The new supports are briefly described below.

- **New Best Start Department Leadership:** First 5 LA hired a new Best Start director and an assistant director of planning and implementation, providing new perspective and direction for the initiative.
- **Developmental Evaluation (DE):** Given the complex and evolving nature of Best Start, First 5 LA opted to implement a developmental evaluation, contracting Harder+Company Community Research and Special Service for Groups (SSG) to help surface key learnings and insights in ways that inform and strengthen the work of all parties.
- **Resident Outreach Coordinators (ROCs):** Thirteen Resident Outreach Coordinators (ROCs) were hired through South Bay Center for Community Development (SBCC) to support outreach and engagement. Their role focused on outreach and engagement of community residents in Best Start activities.
- **Capacity Builders:** The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) was engaged to provide capacity building and technical support to each Community Partnership. Each community was assigned a capacity building liaison to identify capacity building needs and provide technical support that aligned with the BSFF.
- **Learning Teams:** First 5 LA introduced the learning team concept as a way to coordinate the existing and new contractors involved in Best Start, to provide technical assistance and help build capacity in the partnerships. Each community had a dedicated learning team comprised of a Best Start program officer and various contractors including a facilitator, capacity builder, resident outreach coordinator (ROC), and developmental evaluator. The purpose of the team was to support the partnership (specifically smaller workgroups within the partnerships known as “LBD workgroups”⁹) in planning, co-designing, and facilitating the LBD processes.



⁹ LBD workgroups consist of a small group of partnership members within each BSC who take part in planning and designing the LBD process.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

Given the learning and adaptation inherent in place-based work, First 5 LA elected to employ a developmental evaluation (DE) approach to bring evaluative thinking to the community building process. This approach also used rapid feedback to help stakeholders refine their approaches and surface key learnings to inform decision-making.¹⁰ Unlike traditional evaluation where the focus is on summative assessment and accountability, DE is adaptive, nimble, and responsive to emerging issues and questions during the developmental phase of an initiative. While the evaluation was guided by key evaluation questions, it was also highly sensitive to themes as they unfolded. As new issues emerged, key evaluation questions (and therefore methods) were refined to address new areas of inquiry. Unlike traditional evaluators, developmental evaluators played the role of strategic partners and facilitators versus “passive observers,” continuously sharing information, asking questions, and encouraging critical thinking and reflection.

The evaluation team used a collaborative strengths-based approach with a heavy emphasis on stakeholder engagement, facilitated learning, and continuous reflection (for more information about the specific methods and limitations, please see appendix B). It is important to note that the design was intentionally flexible and responsive to issues and themes as they emerged in real time. It also placed emphasis on generating timely feedback in ways that promote continuous learning through oral debriefs, rapid feedback memos, learning briefs, facilitated reflective sessions and various other reports and discussions. The evaluation was not intended to assess change at the population level, but rather capture and share emergent issues and information about what aspects of the community building process were working and what could be reworked to improve results. Throughout the evaluation, the team attempted to rapidly elevate timely themes and insights in ways that helped shape, refine, and change strategies as needed. The developmental evaluation of Best Start took place over an 18-month period and included two phases or “learning cycles,” each approximately nine months in length with a set of guiding learning questions. The first learning cycle (Feb-Oct 2014) focused on:

- how learning contributed to adaptation and the evolution of the initiative
- challenges and effective strategies for engaging diverse stakeholders
- how diverse stakeholders collaborated and worked together toward a shared vision and collective action

The second learning cycle (Nov 2014 – June 2015), continued to examine many of the same areas with a focus on understanding:

- the facilitators and barriers to learning and adaptation
- how partnerships were collaborating and strengthening social connections
- how partnerships were strengthening their capacity to lead and own the community building process



¹⁰ First 5 LA (2013) “Building Stronger Families Framework Learning and Accountability Plan”

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report summarizes key learnings and insights from February 2014 – July 2015 and is based on various data sources, including field observations, focus groups and interviews with Best Start staff, contractors, and Community Partnership members in all 14 Best Start Communities. With an emphasis on collective learning, this report seeks to elevate key insights and catalyze discussions about ways to strengthen efforts moving forward. Specific goals include: (1) to document the progress of the Best Start initiative during the last 18 months, including challenges, promising strategies and major milestones; (2) to surface the most salient, timely, and usable findings in ways that inform ongoing learning, decision-making, and recalibration of strategies to create safe and healthy communities for young children and their families.¹¹ Throughout this report, particular attention is given to the following areas of inquiry:

- **Learning and Adapting:** How is the Best Start initiative evolving? What have the Community Partnerships and First 5 LA learned in the past 18 months and how is this learning being used to adapt, strengthen, and focus efforts?
- **Strengthening Social Connections and Collaboration:** Who is at the table? How are Community Partnerships strengthening their networks and social connections? How are Best Start partners collaborating and working together?
- **Building Capacity and Fostering Community Ownership:** How are Community Partnerships building their capacity to lead and own the community change process? How are they advocating for more favorable policies, resources, and services for young children, families, and the communities where they live?

¹¹ There is a substantial body of literature related to systems, community, and organizational change that points to the importance of adaptive factors such as the ability of individuals, organizations, communities to learn, adapt, and be nimble.





LEARNING & ADAPTING

BACKGROUND: WHY LEARNING AND ADAPTING MATTERS

Place-based initiatives are – at their core – an iterative process of learning by doing that allows all stakeholders to test theories, deepen relationships and build capacity to realize collective goals.¹² As simple as it may seem, learning while doing requires an intentional approach with structured opportunities to discuss, reflect and translate learning into meaningful knowledge, improved practice, and action. Even with a commitment to learning, a funder’s institutional culture and practices can sometimes undermine this critical aspect of place-based work. Likewise, dynamics in the community – including lack of trust and underlying tensions about equity and power, can also stifle attempts to create an open and respectful exchange that values diverse and divergent opinions. This is a common challenge among place-based initiatives and, like Best Start, the literature suggests that many place-based initiatives struggle to strike a balance between the need to act and taking the time to pause and reflect on what’s working or what needs to change.¹³ Ultimately, one of the most important aspects of learning by doing is that learning is translated into new skills, improved practice, and reformulated strategies.¹⁴

Several Best Start staff and contractors acknowledged that creating a learning environment was challenging and required a shift in culture and practice as well as a commitment to honest and transparent dialogue. This section highlights key challenges, insights, and progress related to learning and adapting at both the funder and community-level. Specifically, it focuses on (1) how First 5 LA created more space, structure, and opportunities for organizational learning and learning in the 14 Best Start Communities and (2) how both First 5 LA and Best Start Communities used lessons learned to refine their thinking, adapt their approach, and chart a future course for the initiative.

“**WHEN YOU DO, YOU FEEL MORE CONFIDENT AND WANT TO DO MORE. PEOPLE FEEL THEY ARE MORE A PART OF SOMETHING AND EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN A TANGIBLE WAY AND CAN GET RESULTS AS OPPOSED TO SOMEONE TELLING THEM WHAT TO DO.**”

COMMUNITY MEMBER

¹² Based on Literature Review conducted by Harder+Company (Nov 2011). “Best Practices in Place-based Initiatives: Implications for Implementation and Evaluation of Best Start.” In collaboration with Prudence Brown (national place-based consultant) and Juarez and Associates (Nov. 2011)

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid



Overcoming Challenges: Reflections on Learning and Adapting

In the early phases of LBD, community members, contractors, and Best Start staff identified the following challenges to learning and adapting:

- **Fast-paced nature of LBD process:** Initially there was considerable pressure to complete LBD phases based on unrealistic timelines that ultimately did not support learning and capacity building.
- **Overly complex concepts:** Contractors and community members alike struggled to translate theoretical concepts and terms into language and experiences with which the community could relate.
- **Fear of making mistakes:** Pressure to get things right and stay on track often led staff and contractors to do more leading than coaching and supporting.
- **Lack of role clarity:** Similar to other place-based initiatives, stakeholders grappled with role clarity, especially as roles changed and evolved over time.
- **Translating learning into action:** According to some stakeholders, the initial stages of the LBD process were overly focused on “business meetings” and had “crammed agendas” with little focus on actionable steps to improve the community.

KEY FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED



KEY FINDING: Structured opportunities to reflect and learn build capacity and promote shared vision

The literature on place-based initiatives indicates that structured spaces and opportunities need to be in place to promote learning. Different approaches are often necessary to engage diverse types of learners, including peer networking, team problem-solving, small group exercises, communities of practice, reflective practice, learning retreats, collaborative inquiry, and exposure to experts and readings.¹⁵ As part of the introduction of the Building Stronger Families Framework in early 2014, First 5 LA began to implement several approaches and strategies to better support learning and capacity building efforts in the 14 Best Start Communities. As mentioned earlier, each community engaged in a structured Learning by Doing (LBD) process which was designed to guide planning using data and insights to make informed decisions about community priorities. Technical assistance contractors formed learning teams to support the Community Partnerships with facilitation, data and evaluation, capacity building and outreach efforts.

First 5 LA created a variety of opportunities and venues to promote learning during the last 18 months, some of which were planned and intentional (i.e. cross-site learning communities) while others emerged in response to opportunity or need (i.e. reflective sessions with contractors, staff, and partnerships). Attempts were made to engage participants with diverse learning styles and different roles at key points in time. Specific examples for both organizational and community learning are outlined below.

Examples of structures and strategies for organizational learning

- **Contractor reflective sessions** convened learning teams (Best Start program officer, facilitator, capacity builder, ROC and DE) to discuss emerging issues and potential steps for improvement, while smaller **lead contractor meetings** brought together leaders from each contractor agency to discuss challenges and identify ways to better align their work. Contractor meetings took place every 3-6 months, while the community-specific learning teams were meeting, reflecting and planning on a regular basis.

¹⁵ Meehan, D., Casteneda, N., & Salvesen, A. (2011). “The Role of Leadership in Place-based Initiatives.” Report prepared for The California Endowment by the Leadership Learning Community. Available at: www.leadershiplearning.org.



- A **Best Start Department “Spirit Week,”** held in December of 2014, was not initially planned and was driven by the need to take stock and give staff time to reflect on the key lessons from the early phases of work and clarify goals and next steps to guide their work.
- **Department leadership meetings** and **developmental evaluation coffee hours** were facilitated by developmental evaluators to bring “rapid feedback” to staff regarding implementation issues. These meetings provided opportunities to discuss cross-community issues and themes and identify ways to strengthen implementation efforts.
- **Organizational rapid feedback memos** were also developed by the DE team to surface timely issues that emerged across the Best Start Communities and provide a deeper dive on certain topics (e.g., capacity building, implementation of LBD, learning team dynamics). Given the fast-paced nature of the work, written communications in the form of rapid memos or emails, allowed the DE team to quickly bring issues to the attention of Best Start staff and contractors, which helped to ensure a more timely response. The DE team also gave reflective feedback to the learning teams on a regular basis through e-mails, conversations, and meetings.

Examples of structures and strategies for community learning

- **Learning communities:** To facilitate learning at the community-level, First 5 LA created opportunities for the 14 Best Start Communities to share experiences through quarterly **peer learning communities** that brought together members to learn and share promising practices and strategies and engage in open dialogue with Best Start staff. The Best Start department also hired a program officer to focus exclusively on supporting learning within the department as well as coordinate learning across Best Start Communities. A total of five peer learning communities were organized by First 5 LA during the 18 month period.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE & RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Since the implementation of LBD, nearly all Community Partnerships have created space and opportunities to share, learn, and raise awareness about local resources. Community members, Best Start staff, and contractors have all noted the transformation of partnerships into “community hubs” where residents, parents, and providers come together to share information and resources. Providing a venue where parents and residents can learn about community resources is vital in getting them connected to the services and resources they need.

Many of the communities have set aside time at monthly meetings for local organizations and leaders to present and share information. For example, **Best Start Palmdale** invited the city mayor, librarian, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department to talk about resources, respond to questions, and listen to recommendations for improving local services. The **Best Start Panorama City & Neighbors (PCN)** leadership members regularly reach out to local service providers to arrange presentations at partnership meetings. Ongoing discussions between presenters and leadership members help to ensure presentations are responsive to community interests.

A few communities have worked to raise awareness about timely issues in their respective communities. For example, **Best Start Southeast LA (SELA)** partnered with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) to coordinate and provide parenting and stress management workshops at partnership meetings. The **Best Start Compton/East Compton** partnership members coordinated and hosted an educational resource fair to help teen parents learn about counseling, college, and other educational resources. Over 100 teen parents attended the fair. Best Start Compton/East Compton also sponsored a high school graduation ceremony for teen parents and reported that 90% of those at the ceremony are pursuing higher education.



- **Community reflective sessions and debriefs:** These sessions were facilitated by developmental evaluators in the 14 communities and included various interactive activities that gathered community knowledge and insights about a particular issue (e.g., social networks, building capacity, and social capital) and provided opportunities for members to learn from and share with one another (see appendices C & D). The reflective sessions formally happened at three different points during the 18 month period and were used to gather input as well as engage community members in using and discussing data. **Community-specific briefs** were developed following these sessions as a way to document and share key learnings as well as catalyze further discussions among community members. In addition, the evaluation leads were continuously engaging in reflective discussions at the community-level on a monthly basis.

“...WE HAVE TO BE COMFORTABLE WITH MAKING MISTAKES... THAT IS LEARNING BY DOING.”

BEST START STAFF MEMBER

While some of the structures mentioned above were planned from the start, many were opportunistic or adapted to strengthen the frequency and diversity of learning venues. Through some experimentation, these venues and learning opportunities led to deeper discussions about emerging issues and collective problem-solving among stakeholders. For example, the release of the mid-term DE report was accompanied by the first official reflective session, engaging all Best Start staff and contractors in discussions about progress and challenges during the initial stages of LBD. This facilitated venue proved to be an effective approach to learning by creating structured space to pause, take stock, clarify collective goals, and identify strategies for strengthening the work ahead. Participants also expressed that these opportunities, which were sometimes rich with divergent views and debate, helped to build a sense of collective purpose. Based on that initial success, it was later replicated at various points in time and within each of the Best Start Communities.



KEY FINDING: Effective management of Best Start requires flexibility and a commitment to listen, learn, respond, and adapt

Reflection is that point in the learning cycle where stakeholders pause to make meaning and use it to inform future action.¹⁶ With more structured venues and intentional opportunities to pause and reflect, the Best Start department and Community Partnerships began to more fully integrate a reflective practice into their ongoing work. As mentioned in the previous section, structured reflective sessions created space for thoughtful discussion and a much needed opportunity to refocus on the big picture. Many Best Start staff, contractors, and community partners expressed value in opportunities to reflect on lessons learned as well as the overall purpose and vision of Best Start. A Best Start department staff member described the integration of a reflective practice as a turning point for the department, “We are constantly running a million miles a minute. We are in doing mode. We don’t have a lot of time to think through and reflect in order to make adjustments. [...] When we decided to stop for a moment that was the first time we – as a complete staff – took a comprehensive view of what we’re doing and what actually happened.” Specific examples of reflection and adaptation are highlighted on the next page.

¹⁶ Based on literature review conducted by Harder+Company (Nov 2011). “Best Practices in Place-based Initiatives: Implications for Implementation and Evaluation of Best Start.” In collaboration with Prudence Brown (national place-based consultant) and Juarez and Associates (Nov. 2011)



- Responding to community feedback and needs:** During the early months of LBD, there was considerable push-back from community members and contractors who felt the process was overly complex and driven by funder timelines and agendas. For many, this led to the feeling that the work was “all planning and no action.” Evaluation feedback during the first learning cycle also surfaced confusion about the roles and expectations of learning team members and how that was diverting attention away from learning and community capacity building efforts. As issues surfaced and evaluation feedback was shared with the Best Start department, difficult decisions needed to be made about staying the course or making adjustments. The initial response of Best Start leadership was to take steps to slow down, reconsider timelines, and listen to community feedback. Best Start leadership acknowledged that they “made things too complicated,” from the language used to the number of people involved, which was ultimately, “a recipe for confusion.” While it was difficult to make significant course corrections in the midst of the LBD process, the Best Start department responded with more flexible timelines, clearer parameters and guidelines, and increased communication with the Best Start Communities about the work. More time and attention was also given to learning, reflection and capacity building, all of which became more prevalent in the second learning cycle (Oct 2014-July 2015).
- Fostering deeper dialogue with community partners:** Through the learning communities, First 5 LA provided a venue for community members to share and deepen their connections while engaging in more dialogue with First 5 LA. One Best Start staff member described how the quarterly learning communities evolved from sessions designed to present information to “more genuine conversations with the community” over time. While recognizing that these conversations had sometimes been contentious and difficult, staff noted “we need to have more reflections together with the community.” One stakeholder observed that First 5 LA is “even more inclusive of community input and is actually using it. In the past [First 5 LA was] seeking input but didn’t know how it impacted the work.” Additionally, these meetings created space for community members to voice their concerns and help shape the future direction of Best Start. For example, at one learning community, participants asked for more information and transparency about how Best Start is structured and how funding decisions are made. During a post meeting debrief, staff reflected on the need to demystify and better communicate how First 5 LA functions (including funding decisions and structural constraints). As a result staff intensified their efforts to more clearly

communicate, share, and discuss how organizational operations impact the work. In general, this feedback loop has started to influence First 5 LA in other ways. Most recently, the Best Start department has engaged community representatives to support communications and work with First 5 LA as it navigates upcoming transitions and phases of Best Start. While this is still in an early stage of development, it is another example of how learning and reflection is shaping relationships and informing adaptations to strategies, practices and next steps. Finally, community reflective sessions and debriefs allowed members to dive deeper into community-specific issues and use data and community wisdom to reflect, discuss, and strategize about how to respond to the conditions in their communities.

“DE HAS HELPED BUILD THE CAPACITY OF THE COMMUNITY TO GET TO KNOW DATA AND KNOW THAT DATA IS THEIR FRIEND, AND THAT DATA IS A VERY IMPORTANT PIECE IN MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS.”



- **Refining roles and models:** Another example of using lessons to strengthen Best Start is exemplified in the evolving role of Best Start staff and contractors. During the first learning cycle (Feb-Sept 2014), it became increasingly clear that the role and purpose of learning teams was posing challenges and the LBD process had become “contractor and staff heavy.”¹⁷ Both Best Start staff and contractors acknowledged that considerable time was spent trying to clarify team roles and expectations rather than focusing on community capacity building. Furthermore, multiple stakeholders and observations revealed that many community members wanted to take the lead in facilitation and outreach in their communities, questioning why contractors were paid to do this work. In other communities, members expressed appreciation for the support of contractors but were eager for the opportunity to take on more leadership. Developmental evaluation (DE) feedback (via rapid feedback memos) and facilitated reflective sessions with staff and contractors led to a common agreement that all members of the learning team (contractors and Best Start staff) shared the responsibility of building the communities’ capacity to ultimately take on leadership roles. As a result, both staff and contractors began to more intentionally engage community members in meaningful ways and contemplate their roles as “coaches” rather than “implementers.” For example, learning teams began to engage more community members in co-designing and co-facilitating meetings, as opposed to just using

them as sounding boards. Part of this shift came from the realization that learning teams were holding the reigns too tight or were afraid that things wouldn’t go smoothly if they handed them over too soon. As a result of these reflections, First 5 LA began to discuss transitioning program officers and contractors to support roles and creating opportunities for community members to take more leadership. At the time of this report, these transitions were still a work in progress and caused some anxiety and confusion in the community. Engaging a community advisory group to help First 5 LA manage these transitions is a positive step, however, it will continue to be important to develop transition plans and clear messaging about why and how these transitions will take place.

“NOW WE ARE REALLY STARTING TO CREATE SPACES TO HAVE THE COMMUNITY INFORM OUR PROCESS.”

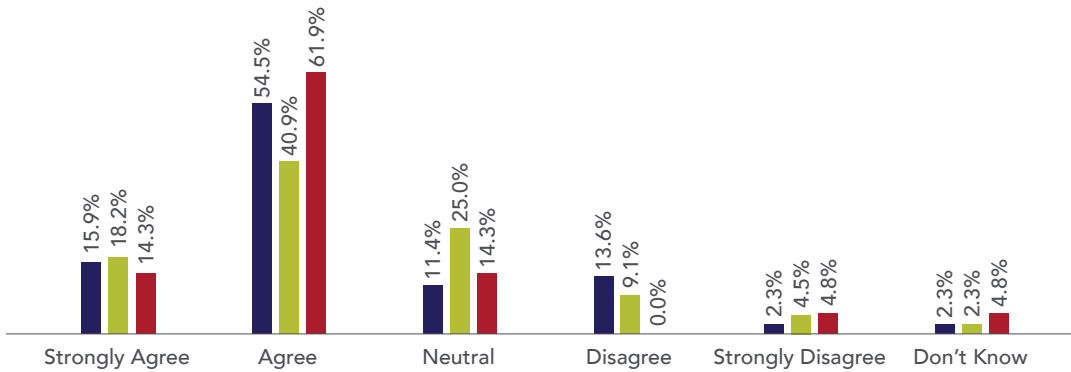
BEST START STAFF MEMBER

- **Institutionalizing a culture of learning and reflection:** In June 2015, the DE team surveyed Best Start staff and contractors to seek input on the extent to which continuous feedback, learning and reflection contribute to shared knowledge, improved practices, and the strengthening of Best Start.¹⁸ Of the 44 individuals who responded, the majority (76%) agreed or strongly agreed that the developmental evaluation helped bring a learning lens to the work by promoting a culture of learning and evaluative inquiry. Nearly 60% agreed or strongly agreed that this learning orientation helped to support adaptation at the funder-level by providing feedback that informed refinements to processes, procedures, and communication (see Exhibit 1). While some staff and contractors felt that changes at the funder-level were either slow or difficult to discern, many mentioned that rapid feedback helped to improve the implementation of LBD by surfacing challenges and community concerns to Best Start leadership. Staff and contractors also noted changes and adaptations at the community-level, highlighting how evaluation feedback helped to ensure that decision-making included the voice of community members, was informed by community-specific data, and reflected the community experience. They also observed that community members became more reflective, applied critical thinking and data in their decision-making, and increased their confidence and ownership in the planning process. Others noted that the rapid feedback and reflection helped communities evaluate their decision-making processes and increase meeting effectiveness by focusing on goals and objectives.

¹⁷ Based on DE observations as well as feedback from Best Start staff and contractors

¹⁸ The DE Reflection survey was sent to 86 individuals, including Best Start staff, 199 Start support staff and contractors that made up the learning team. Out of the 86 individuals, 44 completed the survey for a response rate of 51%.

EXHIBIT 1. Best Start Staff and Contractor DE feedback (n=44)



DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION HAS HELPED...

- ...First 5 LA and the Best Start department incorporate learning and reflection into their process and practice.
- ...support First 5 LA and the Best Start Department in making adaptations or refinements to their processes or approach (e.g. procedures, criteria, communications, etc.)
- ...promote a culture of learning, evaluative inquiry, and reflections within the Best Start Partnerships and leadership bodies.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Learning and Adapting

Creating intentional time and space for reflection and learning is a common challenge for many place-based initiatives. In the last year and a half, First 5 LA made important strides in creating structures and bringing a learning lens to the work, both at the community-level and within the organization. Through this process, staff came to reflect on existing organizational mindsets and practices that can either facilitate or impede genuine reflection, learning, and adaptation. The following highlights key considerations for First 5 LA as it strives to model and embed continuous learning into the DNA of the organization and the Best Start initiative.





- **Assess existing learning structures.** Through the various learning structures and venues (learning communities, reflective sessions, and contractor convenings), First 5 LA provided opportunities to engage in collective learning and knowledge generation in real time. Some of these structures were planned while others were opportunistic or emerged out of need. Moving forward, First 5 LA should continue to create and assess opportunities to take stock of how its organizational structures, practices and expectations facilitate or hinder efforts to incorporate a learning culture – both within the organization and the Best Start Communities. First 5 LA and the Best Start Communities should continue to be nimble and attuned to the ever-changing context as well as key points in time when stakeholders may need to pause, take stock and re-focus on the shared vision and goals of Best Start.
- **Institutionalize space and time for reflection, learning and adapting.** First 5 LA should continue to be intentional in incorporating reflective practice and evaluative thinking into its work. Dedicating time to reflect – whether at the end of a meeting or at key points in an initiative’s development, can help bring renewed clarity and direction to complex and ever-evolving community change efforts. For example, the one week pause in December 2014 (described as “Spirit Week”) gave Best Start staff an opportunity to reflect on what they were learning and what needed to shift moving forward. Several staff noted the importance and positive impact of this pause and felt it was an important practice to continue.¹⁹ Likewise, designating time in partnership meetings to build relationships and promote learning is also essential. It is also critical to make sure learning and reflection is translated into shared knowledge, improved practice, and actionable solutions within First 5 LA and in the Best Start Communities.²⁰
- **Continue to use diverse approaches to meet the different learning styles of various stakeholders.** Given the diversity of learning styles, multiple vehicles and approaches are often needed to make learning relevant and meaningful to all parties.²¹ First 5 LA refined and adapted various approaches during the first year, such as promoting more community-friendly language, fewer formal PowerPoint presentations, and more hands-on and dynamic activities that promoted social connections. Finally, reflective sessions often involved informal interactive activities that helped participants learn, share and discuss their points of view on a particular topic in small group settings. Reflective sessions have shown to be effective learning approaches at the organizational and community-level, and the Best Start initiative would benefit from their continued use.

¹⁹ Based on focus groups with Best Start staff. (See appendices E & F.)

²⁰ Based on Literature Review conducted by Harder+Company (Nov 2011). “Best Practices in Place-based Initiatives: Implications for Implementation and Evaluation of Best Start.” In collaboration with Prudence Brown (national place-based consultant) and Juarez and Associates (Nov. 2011)

²¹ Meehan, D., Casteneda, N., & Salvesen, A. (2011). “The Role of Leadership in Place-based Initiatives.” Report prepared for The California Endowment by the Leadership Learning Community. Available at: www.leadershiplearning.org.





STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS & COLLABORATION

BACKGROUND

Why social connections matter

Historically, social change efforts have been the product of many people and organizations working together in tight or loosely connected groups to improve conditions, address inequities, and strengthen communities. Like other community change initiatives, Best Start is about community building and bringing people together to improve conditions for young children, families and the communities in which they live. Trust and relationship building are key ingredients for successful place-based work and create the necessary conditions for residents, community-based organizations, service providers, and policy makers to engage in collective action.^{22,23}

According to the literature, trust is a dimension of social capital, defined as the “features of social life-networks, norms, and trust- that enable participants to act more effectively and pursue shared objectives.”²⁴

A key area of inquiry for the developmental evaluation of Best Start was to understand how Best Start Community Partnership members were strengthening their relationships and building their social networks within and outside the partnerships. The following section provides key insights, challenges, and progress related to the evolution of social connections and networks. Specifically, this section will provide (1) an overview of partnership member demographics to understand the stakeholders who are working together in this initiative, (2) structures and opportunities to build connections within Best Start and in the broader community, (3) the strengthening of social connections and collaboration within the Community Partnerships, and, (4) the expansion of social networks in the broader community.

²² “Place-based Initiatives Transforming Communities,” Proceedings from the Place-based Approaches Roundtable. (2012). Murdoch Children’s Research Institute.

²³ Kubisch, A. C., Auspos, P., Brown, P., & Dewar, T. (2010). “Voices from the Field III: Lessons and Challenges from Two Decades of Community Change Efforts.” Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute.

²⁴ Putnam, R. D. (2000). “Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.” New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.



Best Start Community Partnership demographics: Who is at the table?

First 5 LA's Building Stronger Families Framework highlights the importance of building social connections, collective action and shared vision. Through Community Partnerships, Best Start created opportunities for parents, service providers, and community stakeholders to connect, build relationships, and collaborate to improve outcomes for children ages 0-5 and their families. Best Start also facilitated connections with the broader community and built momentum across all 14 communities to ensure that families and communities are stronger and "children are healthy, safe and prepared for school."

EXHIBIT 2 Race/Ethnicity (n=555)

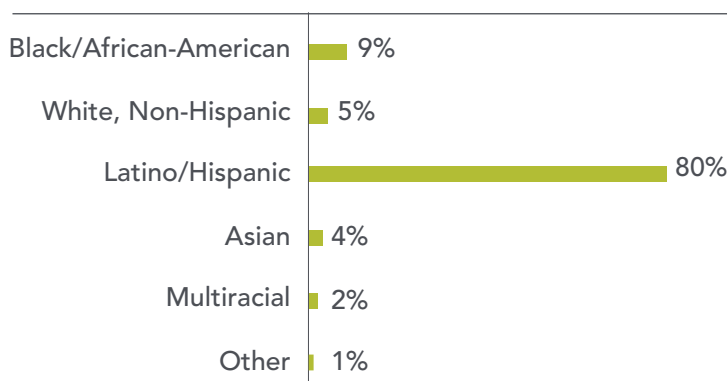
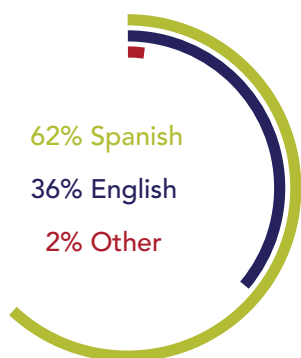


EXHIBIT 3 Primary Language (n=566)



Throughout the last 18 months, data was gathered (through community reflective sessions, focus groups, and observations) from the Best Start Communities to better understand member engagement, social connections and collaboration. In the spring of 2015, community reflective sessions were conducted in the 14 communities, gathering demographic information and community insights regarding social connections, collaboration and network building. While not all Best Start Partnership members participated in these sessions, the data reflects a fairly representative sub-sample of the total number of partnership members and provides an initial understanding of who is at the table and how members are working together. Overall, 566 members of Best Start Partnerships participated in the reflective sessions, with the majority identifying as parents/residents (56-63%), Hispanic/Latino (80%), primarily Spanish-speaking (62%) and female (90%). Partnership members were a mean age of 43.6 years and 38.5% had at least one child under the age of six. In terms of participation, about 44% have been attending meetings for more than 1 year, while 15% were new and attending their very first meeting at the time of the reflective session.

EXHIBIT 4 Roles

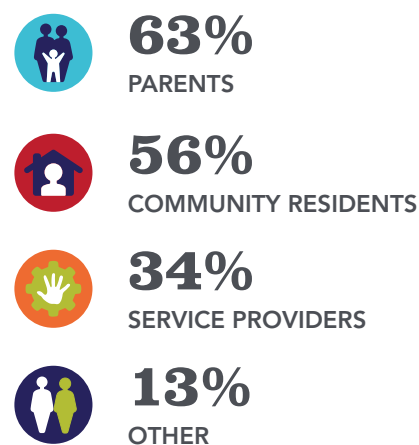
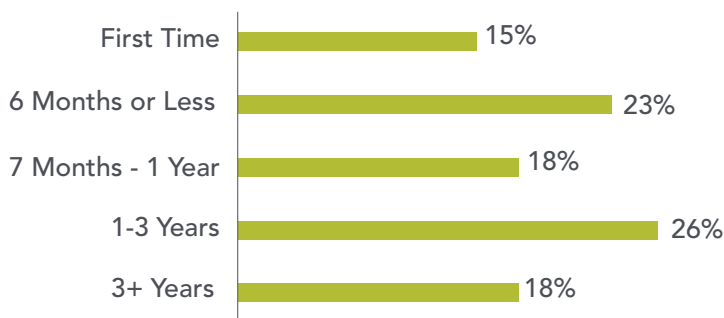


EXHIBIT 5 Length in Best Start Partnership (n=543)



²⁵ see Appendix C for methods used in these sessions

²⁶ see Appendix D for more descriptive cross-community data from the community reflective sessions

KEY INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED



KEY FINDING: Best Start has created structures and opportunities to strengthen social connections and collaboration

Throughout the last 18 months, Community Partnerships have strengthened social connections, working collaboratively and making decisions around shared goals. However, the first several months of LBD implementation made strengthening connections difficult given the complex and timeline-driven nature of the process. Early in the process, many stakeholders expressed that more focus was placed on completing the stages of LBD and less on making the time and space for meaningful connections and allowing relationships to flourish. There was also concern about keeping existing members engaged and orienting new members to the work. In addition, it takes time to develop trusting relationships especially between parents/residents and formal organizations (i.e., community based organizations, First 5 LA) given the history of mistrust and negative experiences many of these communities may have had with formal systems and institutions.

Regardless, many Best Start Communities were able to address these challenges. During interviews and focus groups with contractors and staff, many noted more active participation among community members at meetings, and respectful sharing of diverse opinions and points of view. Building social connections became the priority for many of the Best Start Communities and five of them chose social connections as their priority focus, recognizing that without strong relationships it would be difficult to achieve their collective goals. In many ways, Best Start played a critical role in creating space and opportunities for residents to come together in both organized and informal ways, which helped to address some of the challenges that emerged early on. Specific examples for these Best Start structures are outlined on the next page.

Overcoming Challenges: Reflections on Social Connections and Collaboration

Community members, Best Start staff, and contractors shared the following key challenges to building social connections and collaboration.

- **Trust takes time.** Genuine trusting relationships among stakeholders take time to develop, and require patience, mutual respect, and understanding of diverse perspectives and needs.
- **Minimal opportunities to connect.** During the early implementation of LBD, stakeholders expressed limited opportunities for partnership members to connect and strengthen relationships in meaningful ways.
- **Few members in leadership groups.** Smaller numbers of partnership members engaged in more focused planning work (e.g., leadership/guidance bodies), limiting opportunities for more members to engage in collaborative work.
- **Difficultly keeping momentum.** Due to the fast-paced, and timeline-driven complex LBD process, Community Partnerships struggled with keeping existing members engaged and new members up to speed with the work.



Structures promoting social connections and collaboration

- **BSC Partnership meetings** convened on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to discuss issues related to the health and well-being of children ages 0-5, as well as plan and develop strategies to address their community's needs. The work of the Community Partnership was an opportunity for members to share their concerns, work collaboratively to identify solutions, and vote on key decisions. Many communities included “ice breaker” and “parent café” activities to promote fun and interactive ways for members to get to know each other on a personal level.
- **Leadership (or guidance body) meetings and LBD workgroups** brought together a smaller group of Community Partnership members to engage in more focused planning. Leadership members worked closely over the last 18 months with learning team members during the LBD process. This included collaborating and co-developing agendas and strategies.
- **Learning communities** brought together representatives from all 14 Best Start Communities to discuss their work and share what they learned through interactive activities. Several stakeholders expressed the benefit of having a shared space for members from across all the communities to have open and honest dialogue about promising strategies and challenges.
- **Community learning teams** were initiated by residents in a few communities (in addition to contractor teams) to help interpret, use, and share data with the broader partnership. These community-driven groups helped unpack concepts, requirements, and processes in a way that makes sense for their communities.

“**THIS HAS REALLY IMPACTED MY LIFE. BEFORE I WAS ISOLATED; I DIDN'T KNOW TOO MANY PEOPLE. THROUGH THESE CONNECTIONS AND MEETINGS I'VE FELT BETTER.**”

COMMUNITY MEMBER

“WE’VE SEEN A STRENGTHENED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PARENTS/RESIDENTS. AN INTENTIONAL REACH ACROSS THE AISLE.”

PARTNERSHIP MEMBER

- **Outreach and communications committees** were formed in several communities to help promote new participation and members, and to support member engagement. These groups were typically led by First 5 LA staff (e.g., program officers or public affairs staff) in collaboration with partnership members. Often, these committees worked closely with the Resident Outreach Coordinators to ensure alignment of activities. In some communities, these committees were exploring processes for how Best Start Partnerships can participate in and sponsor local community events.

In addition to the existing internal Best Start structures that promoted social connections and collaboration, there were efforts implemented outside the immediate partnerships that encouraged greater connections between members and the broader community. According to some stakeholder groups, the Resident Outreach Coordinators (ROCs)²⁷ played a role in helping build connections that take place in the broader community. As one stakeholder explained, “One of the ROCs has been asked by the external workgroup to teach participants how to approach a resident and how to invite them to be part of the movement. A year ago, they would not ask [the ROC] for any training, but a year later they realized I can learn something from the ROC.” The role of the ROCs also evolved over the last 18 months. Initially their focus was to help bring new members to the partnerships and share the needs of the broader community back to the partnerships. Now they are working more closely with partnership members to identify ways to strengthen relationships outside of meetings and build leadership capacity. For example, some Community Partnerships worked with ROCs to form “connection groups,” where parents can meet outside partnership meetings to discuss issues that are important to them, all while engaging in interactive activities such as knitting circles.





KEY FINDING: Best Start Community Partnerships strengthened their connections and capacity to collaborate as a leadership body

The Best Start Community Partnerships were described by focus group participants as community “hubs” where parents, residents, and community-based organizations come together to build relationships, learn about community needs and assets, build social support, and work toward shared goals. During the last 18 months, community-level data (e.g., observations, reflective sessions, focus groups) examined the evolving relationships between these stakeholder groups and the various structures (e.g., partnership meetings, leadership groups) that promote social connections and collaboration.

While the structures noted earlier were intended to promote social connections and collaboration, there were also some challenges. For example, while partnership meetings created space for social connections to occur between the majority of partnership members, workgroups such as leadership or guidance body meetings brought a smaller group to collaborate in planning and co-developing agendas. Stakeholders expressed both benefits

and drawbacks to this approach. Many stakeholders explained that smaller groups fostered deeper connections and trust, noting, “I often hear community members referring to the leadership group as a family. That bond and connection has really taken root over the last 10-11 months.” On the other hand, this approach relied on a small number of leaders to move the work forward and caused some members to feel fatigued. As one stakeholder explained, “The model is great, but it falls on 14 people, and how do we extend the network?”

Another challenge was the limited representation and engagement of CBOs in the partnership and in the smaller workgroups (see Exhibit 6). Across most communities, leadership groups and committees were primarily composed of parents and residents, while agency representatives had a limited presence and role. As one participant described, “We don’t have a lot of CBOs involved in our leadership meetings.” Others explained that the role of service providers was often limited to providing informational presentations. DE observations during the last year also found that CBOs remained somewhat segregated to “CBO tables” in some communities, (sometimes due to language barriers), preventing CBOs from deeper engagement with community members. While the goal was to have resident-driven partnerships, CBOs were considered a valuable asset. Overall, this implies the need for more opportunities for organizations and parents to strengthen their relationships and engage more fully as partners in the process.

“PARTICIPATING HAD OPENED DOORS TO CONNECT WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS...COMING TO BEST START MEETINGS HELPS MAKE THOSE CONNECTIONS.”

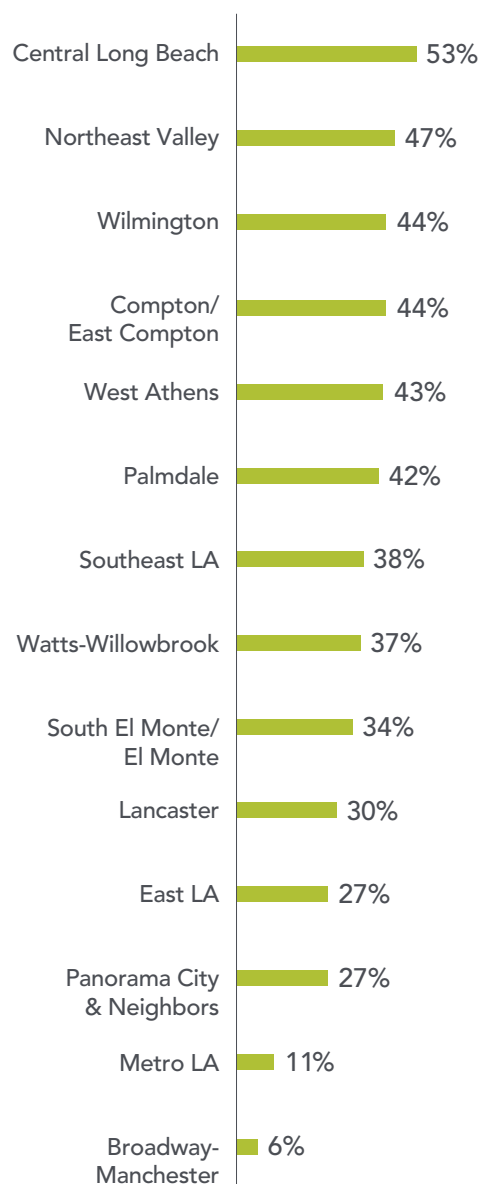
PARTNERSHIP MEMBER

²⁷ As mentioned earlier in this report, Resident Outreach Coordinators (ROCs) were hired through South Bay Center for Community Development (SBCC) to support outreach and engagement. Their role focused on outreach and engagement of community residents in Best Start activities.



Despite these challenges, feedback from community stakeholders, Best Start staff, and contractors clearly indicated important gains in building social connections and support between individual residents and with community based organizations that are part of the partnerships. Specific examples of the evolving nature of these relationships and networks are highlighted below.

EXHIBIT 6 Percentage of Community Based Organization Representatives in BSC Partnership



* This data is based on the number of participating members during reflective sessions and therefore may not be a true reflection of actual CBO representation.

- Providing social support and reducing isolation:** While partnership meetings brought people together to achieve common goals, they also provided a type of social safety net for residents who may have few opportunities to connect with other parents and caregivers with young children or who were reluctant to connect with others due to language barriers. Partnership members found opportunities to connect on an individual level, share their struggles and achievements, and offer each other emotional and social support. For example, during focus groups and observations, many community members said the opportunity to connect with other parents and individuals was one of the most beneficial aspects of Best Start. One parent explained how hearing about others’ diverse experiences and struggles resulted in a mutual understanding that, “My concerns are their concerns as well.” Another community member explained, “More than anything we support each other morally.” For others, Best Start was a place for acceptance and belonging. “I thought it was awful when I moved here. Then I started coming here. I found my people. It’s been amazing. I feel like you guys are my people.” Contractors and Best Start staff also had similar sentiments about the impact the partnership meetings had on members’ sense of social and emotional support: “Some of our parents and residents had a feeling of isolation, but now there is a venue for them to come and talk about their issues. [They] now have a community forum to meet other parents. People come to share information and it’s almost become like a social hub.”
- Strengthening connections between residents and community organizations:** Findings from focus groups and reflective sessions suggest the need for increased engagement and connections between residents and service providers to overcome mistrust and increase awareness about community resources. Presentations by CBOs at partnership meetings were an important way for parents and residents to learn more about community resources and how to engage with local service providers. One stakeholder observed, “I noticed how engaged community members were with those presentations. They are talking to the agencies at the end. That partnership has helped build connections to the agencies.” CBOs also benefited from these connections by learning firsthand about the community’s needs and priorities. As one service provider explained, “It’s all about building relationships. I felt like in the past I didn’t have much connection to the community. The partnership has helped me learn from the community itself.” Additionally, providers learned more about each other and their broader social service network as explained by one service provider, “It is good to see more partnerships between agencies. Before, they were ‘siloed,’ now they are building contacts, sharing resources, and re-referring.”



BEST START COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS ARE BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND ENGAGING THE BROADER COMMUNITY

During the last 18 months, the Best Start Communities were strengthening connections within their partnerships and in the broader community. Many communities were able to bring new members to the table and others were discussing ways to engage other residents and partners, such as faith-based organizations or groups who are not well-represented.

In **Best Start Lancaster**, through the support of the Resident Outreach Coordinator (ROC), Best Start members have carved out spaces to connect with other parents and residents. In July 2015, they held a Family Fun Day which over 350 parents, children, and community residents attended. People were able to learn about Best Start and other community resources, connect with other parents and families, and enjoy a day of family activities. Partnership members were pivotal in the creation and success of this event and spoke about the importance of social connections, especially in a community where parent isolation is a large concern.

The South LA Best Start Communities have worked on engaging specific populations. For example, Best Start West Athens and Best Start Compton/East Compton aim to engage teen parents as a core part of their partnership. They have worked with First 5 LA public affairs and an outside communications agency to create an outreach and communications plan to engage teen parents. Best Start Watts-Willowbrook partnership members have already seen great success in engaging pregnant teens and young parents. Over the last 18 months, the Watt-Willowbrook leadership worked with a local continuation school, which has a large population of pregnant teens and teen parents, to increase their involvement in Best Start. Pregnant teens and teen parents, particularly women, have started attending the Best Start Watts/Willowbrook meeting, have increased their involvement in regional Best Start activities, and now have a voice in the leadership group.

Lastly, **Best Start East LA community members** have increased social connections and collaboration as a result of their work in the Community Based Action Research (CBAR) project. Part of the East LA CBAR project looked at the access and utilization of green spaces in the community. Parents and community residents worked closely for almost a year – they met biweekly, conducted surveys and observations, and worked together to develop recommendations for the partnership and for policy makers. As a result of this process, parents noted that they feel more connected to one another and the community. A subset of this group has become increasingly involved with the LA Neighborhood Land Trust and other partners who work to increase access to and utilization of green spaces in East LA. They have joined park clean ups and have helped conduct surveys as part of larger ‘green spaces needs assessments’. **By coming together parents are increasing their collaboration, capacity, and leadership.**



KEY FINDING: Best Start Community Partnerships strengthened their connections with the broader community

Observations and reflective sessions with the 14 communities revealed that partnerships were building awareness of Best Start in the broader community and strengthening their connections with groups outside of the partnerships. Some partnerships tried to partner and leverage resources with other organizations but had challenges keeping external groups engaged. As one stakeholder described, “There is a structure for collaboration to happen, I just don’t think it is being put into practice in the most meaningful and authentic way.” Several participants also shared that there is a disconnect between First 5 LA and the BSCs in understanding the opportunities for partnership and leveraging. For example, there is an unclear relationship between BSCs and other First 5 LA-funded programs such as the Welcome Baby Home Visitation Program. As one stakeholder explained, “First 5 LA doesn’t really tell you about their connections, you have to figure that out on your own.” Recent observations from the learning community revealed that some parents and residents continue to feel a lack of shared vision and consistent messaging about the goals of Best Start (and First 5 LA in general), which prevents partnership members from effectively reaching out to external stakeholders.

While challenges remain, BSCs made significant strides in developing new relationships with the broader community. The following provides key insights on the areas that showed the most significant growth.

- **Connecting with families outside the partnership:** Several parents mentioned how they are sharing what they’ve learned with their families and friends outside of Best Start. One resident noted, “I share everything I learn with my community and about the good things going on. I feel like my ideas count.” Additionally, the connection groups supported by the ROCs, as well as outreach and engagement committees led by community members were promising strategies in building relationships with parents and residents in the broader community. As one stakeholder explained the impact of the connection groups, “Things really happen organically. It helps to remember that every resident has something to offer. One example, a mother helped another mother transfer her kid into the other’s school. Another member is offering Spanish speakers classes on how to write and read. I’ve seen that more in the connection groups than in the partnership. It’s [the partnership] bigger, but the people don’t get the space to actually interact.”
- **Networking and collaborating with community groups.** During the 18 month period, several BSCs worked collectively to connect and build partnerships with organizations and groups in the broader community. Some promising strategies include the work done within outreach and communications work-groups that focused on bringing in new members. Some communities invited new organizations into their partnership meetings. As one partnership member explained, “There have been organizations that come into the community and we do information-sharing with them, bring them up to speed as to what we need and what we are doing.” Partnership members were actively involved in connecting and partnering with other civic groups, businesses and institutions including police departments, parent support groups, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, educators, and

“ WE HAVE BEEN BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL LIBRARIES, CCRC (CHILD CARE RESOURCE CENTERS) AND LOCAL NONPROFITS. THESE ARE AGENCIES IN OUR COMMUNITY THAT ARE REALLY THRILLED THAT WE ARE GOING TO BE BUILDING THE PARTNERSHIP.”

other community advocacy groups to help move their work forward.²⁸ Exhibit 7²⁹ is based on data collected from community reflective sessions and provides an overview of the types of connections Community Partnerships made with various stakeholder groups in the broader community. Overall, findings revealed that across the 14 communities, more members were strongly connected to parent and neighborhood groups and less connected to faith-based efforts and local elected officials. This suggests that many parents were actively involved in other groups that help build their parenting and advocacy skills. Additionally, these findings highlight areas where BSCs can target future outreach efforts (i.e., connect to faith-based organizations and elected official offices).

EXHIBIT 7 Types of Connections with Broader Community

Parent and Neighborhood Groups	Neighborhood Action Councils (NACs), Resident Outreach Coordinator (ROC)-led groups, and other groups where parents and neighbors are coming together to better their community.
Community Based Organizations	Includes community members that are involved with local CBOs through advisory boards, volunteerism, and advocacy. This does not include parents and community residents employed by local organizations.
Education	Involvement in local schools through PTAs and other parent councils as well as involvement in education policy and reform.
Community Advocacy Groups	Groups that are actively involved in topic-specific advocacy efforts such as housing and homelessness or health.
Faith-based Community Groups	Local worship centers and faith-based programs.
Collaboratives	Formalized groups of people, usually professionals in their field, coming together to share information, leverage resources, and impact service delivery, policy and advocacy efforts. Examples include the CLB Home Visitation Collaborative, the Valley Communities Care Consortium, and the AV Partners in Health.
Local Government	Connections with elected officials.
Topic-specific Classes	Workshop on topics such as parenting or domestic violence.

²⁸ For specific examples of how connections to broader community groups and institutions resulted in collective action, refer to the section on “Building Capacity and Fostering Community Ownership”

²⁹ This data was gathered during the community reflective sessions across all 14 BSCs during the spring of 2015. Social network analysis was conducted to examine the strength in connections with these community groups across all 14 BSCs (see Appendix G)



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Strengthening social connections and collaboration

Overall, the Best Start Communities were strengthening their social connections within the partnerships as well as with the broader community. Stronger relationships and increased collaboration among members has helped build more social capital. Additionally, making connections with the broader community suggested that partnership members set the foundation for strengthening opportunities to leverage resources and civic efforts to improve their communities. While social connections and networks have grown, these efforts are far from complete. Below are some opportunities to continue building stronger collaborative networks within the partnerships and in the broader community.

- **Promote engagement and collaboration beyond leadership groups.** Findings suggested that deeper levels of collaboration were taking place within smaller leadership bodies. Identifying more leaders within the partnerships and providing opportunities for them to work together toward a common goal will strengthen their relationships and foster the trust needed to increase resident engagement and genuine collaboration.³⁰ This can include identifying additional workgroups (e.g., new member orientation workgroups, “reflection leader” workgroup) that are needed to improve the partnership, and then identifying members who have the assets, skills and interests to participate in these groups.
- **Increase participation of CBOs and other local social service entities in Best Start Communities.** While the Community Partnerships were made up mostly of parents and residents, several stakeholders feel that a stronger representation of CBOs would be beneficial. Connecting to CBOs not only helps parents and residents better understand the resources in the community, but can create stronger trusting partnerships with formal service providers. Identifying ways to bring in other community entities like local businesses can also help create a stronger support network beyond parents and residents, as well as opportunities to leverage resources (e.g., meetings spaces, food accommodations for partnership meetings). Some communities have already engaged in these types of efforts forming workgroups that develop plans for reaching out to local businesses (door to door) asking for their support, while others have invited community based organizations to partnership meetings to highlight their work and local resources.

³⁰ Geller, J.D., Doykos, B., Craven, K., et al. (2014) “Engaging Residents in Community Change: The Critical Role of Trust in the Development of a Promise Neighborhood.” *Teachers College Record*, 116, 1-42.





- **Promote learning and collaboration across the 14 BSCs.** Currently there are a few structures in place to promote social connections across the 14 BSCs. The learning community that was held quarterly brings select members from each community to share and learn about their work and promising practices. While those who participated in these have expressed the benefit of learning and networking, others are not aware of this opportunity. As one stakeholder explained, learning communities created space for “inter-partnership communication,” but “right now, there is very little discussion about what the learning community is for.” During the most recent learning community in August of 2015, community members expressed interest in starting additional learning communities in regions where more partnership members could attend. Creating additional opportunities for partnership members from across the 14 communities to get to know each other and learn from one another will strengthen their broader social network, and provide opportunities to work collectively around shared goals.
- **Develop a communication toolkit to support outreach and engagement efforts.** Developing a shared vision is important in communicating and reaching out to new members and potential partners. Community members expressed the need to build the capacity of residents to speak about First 5 LA and Best Start with the broader community. Some suggestions from the recent learning community included developing a communication toolkit for members to use during outreach or while engaged with broader community efforts. This can include developing clear talking points for how to introduce Best Start to the broader community as well as a basic overview of how Best Start connects with other First 5 LA initiatives and efforts sponsored by other agencies in Los Angeles County. In some communities, these discussions have already started in the outreach workgroups, but there is continued need for consistent language and messaging to reinforce the shared vision of the work.

“IT HAS HELPED ME CONNECT WITH OTHER PARENTS AND SHARE WHAT I LEARNED HERE WITH PEOPLE WHO DON'T ATTEND THESE MEETINGS. I SHARED WITH THEM WHAT THESE MEETINGS ARE ABOUT.”

PARTNERSHIP MEMBER



BUILDING CAPACITY & FOSTERING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

BACKGROUND

Why community ownership and community capacity matter

Place-based initiatives such as Best Start aim to achieve community change through shared vision and collective action. Those engaged in place-based work across the nation continue to champion, “the power of people to solve their own problems when a platform is offered for them to come together and work on issues of common concern.”³¹ The literature in this field supports **community ownership** as an essential ingredient for sustaining place-based initiatives, noting “ownership and responsibility for change need to be shared,” in order to be sustained.³² *Community* can include parents and residents, as well as the local agencies that serve them.

Overcoming Challenges: Reflections on Capacity Building & Community Ownership

- **Capacity building and leadership development take focused energy and time:** Stakeholders come from diverse backgrounds with unique learning and capacity building needs. Training and skill development require time and appropriate approaches that build onto existing assets and skills to increase leadership.
- **Overly prescriptive processes can limit capacity building and stifle innovation:** The initial roll out of the LBD process was overly complex and driven by top-down funder timelines and agendas. This resulted in contractors holding the LBD process, rather than community members. It also prevented community members from learning from actions and responding with innovative solutions.
- **Frequent shifts and changes can lead to confusion and distrust:** While adaptability and nimbleness are important in place-based work, frequent shifts and mid-course adjustments created confusion and frustration among community members. This results in unclear expectations for what types of capacities and skills need to be strengthened.
- **Narrow focus on building the capacity of a small number of leaders:** Throughout the last 18 months, numerous stakeholders expressed the need to expand capacity building and leadership opportunities to members outside of the smaller leadership/guidance bodies.

Capacity building is also considered an essential building block that “anchor[s] community change efforts in the reality of residents’ lives while also providing a platform that allows the work to grow and build vibrant, healthy communities over time.”³³ Many place-based initiatives provide community members with the space to practice and learn a variety of skills, including: developing agendas, facilitating meetings, and building consensus; public speaking and presenting; collecting, analyzing and using data to make decisions; mediating or resolving conflicts; and outreach and engaging other community members. Such individual-level capacity building not only levels the playing field so that members from marginalized communities can participate equally with confidence, information, and decision-making authority³⁴, but it also grows the number of leaders who are prepared to work together towards a common goal.³⁵ By developing problem-solving capacity among a broad set of stakeholders, capacity building promotes sustainable community ownership by not having to rely on any one person’s knowledge, expertise, and short-term involvement.³⁶

³¹ USC Sol Price Center for Social Innovation (2015). Place-Based Initiatives in the Context of Public Policy and Markets: Moving to Higher Ground. Available at: <https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/files/2014/12/Prioritizing-Place-Moving-to-Higher-Ground.pdf>.

³² USC Price, p. 49.

³³ The Aspen Institute and JCNi (2013). Building Block 2: Build Trust and Capacity. Resident-Centered Community Building: What Makes It Different? Available at: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/images/rcc/rcc-CCLE-Report-April-2013.pdf>.

³⁴ Chaskin, R. (2000). “Lessons Learned from the Implementation of the Neighborhood and Family Initiative: A Summary of Findings.” Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Available at: www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/old_reports/47.pdf.

³⁵ Meehan, D., Casteneda, N., Salvesen, A. (2011). “The Role of Leadership in Place-based Initiatives.” Report prepared for the California Endowment by the Leadership Learning Community. Available at: www.leadershiplearning.org.

²¹⁴ Kubish, A., Auspos, P., Brown, P., Buck, E. & Dewar, T. (2011). “Voices from the Field III: Lessons and Challenges for Foundations Based on Two Decades of Community Change Efforts.” *The Foundation Review*, 3(1&2), 138-149.



Like many other place-based initiatives, Best Start placed emphasis on engaging community members to identify and prioritize goals, cultivating leadership skills, and creating a sense of ownership for the community building process. This is particularly important in marginalized communities that have historically had limited influence and opportunities to contribute to institutional and systems-level decisions that directly impact their lives (e.g., schools, police, and social service agencies).^{37,38} This section highlights accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities to further expand capacity building and community ownership. Specifically it focuses on how community members are (1) building their capacity, (2) taking more ownership of community building efforts and (3) translating new knowledge and skills into collective actions.

BEST START COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS ARE TAKING OWNERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY BUILDING PROCESS

The Learning By Doing process served as a platform to build leadership capacities of parents and residents throughout the Best Start Communities. The desire of participants to expand their leadership and apply their emerging knowledge is demonstrated through the following examples.

In **Best Start East Los Angeles** members of the advisory group scheduled regular retreats to deepen relationships and clarify their roles. They also identified new positions such as an Evaluation and Data Champion and a representative for their outreach and engagement committee. In **Best Start Metro Los Angeles**, guidance body members created a process to request and obtain trainings on table facilitation, public speaking and decision-making. As a result, they were able to modify the partnership's governance structure to be more conducive to inclusive decision-making and co-creation of the LBD process. In **Best Start Panorama City & Neighbors**, guidance body members asked the original contractor-only learning teams to develop community learning teams that would direct the LBD process. The community learning team created their own unique governance rules and decided their purpose was to co-design and co-present not only elements of the LBD process, but eventually all elements of the full community partnership meeting agenda with little to no contractor guidance.

In **Best Start Northeast Valley**, Community Learning Teams and Guidance Body members were eager to demonstrate their community wisdom and apply their skills by co-developing the LBD worksheet. As parents and residents, they expressed the need to have full ownership over the worksheet process and met weekly for over two months to complete it. They also shared and received approval via vote from Community Partnership members for their work. In **Best Start Palmdale**, leadership members have strengthened internal governance processes such as bylaws, membership requirements, and roles and responsibilities. They have also developed sub-committees (Internal Affairs and Community Relations) that allow more members to be involved in moving the partnership work forward. The focus on governance has allowed them to create the necessary structures to collaborate more effectively.

³⁷ Bolivar, J.M. & Chrispeels, J.H. (2011). Enhancing parent leadership through building social and intellectual capital. *American Education Research Journal*, 48(1), 4-38.

³⁸ Geller, J.D., Doykos, B., Craven, K., et al. (2014). "Engaging Residents in Community Change: The Critical Role of Trust in the Development of a Promise Neighborhood." *Teacher College Record*, 116, 1-4215



KEY INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED



KEY FINDING: The Learning By Doing process helped build key skills and leadership capacity at the community-level

The introduction of the Building Stronger Families Framework and LBD process was intended to more clearly articulate what it will take to improve the lives of young children and their families. LBD was not the first planning process for these communities and represented a reset in the Best Start initiative after a pause in the previous year. Not surprisingly, some community members expressed skepticism about its purpose. As one partnership member stated during the initial phases of the LBD process, “There was a shift when First 5 LA inserted themselves into the process. It stopped being a bottom-up evolution to now top-down. There is a lot more bureaucracy from First 5 LA. It’s unclear where we’re going and when we can engage in community collaboration again.”

As part of the first learning cycle, the DE team released a mid-term learning report to share emergent themes and key lessons from the early implementation of LBD (February – July 2014). The mid-term report highlighted stakeholder concerns that the LBD process was overly complex and driven by funder timelines and agendas. As a result, capacity building opportunities for community members were limited.

Despite those limitations and frustrations, Best Start Community members shared how much the LBD process had helped them grow as parents and develop as community leaders. Focus groups and interviews with partnership members, Best Start staff, and contractors provided further confirmation for what developmental evaluators were observing in the communities. At the individual-level, community members have strengthened their leadership and capacity skills in the following ways:

- **Leaders support clarification of complex concepts:** Developmental evaluators in a few communities observed that, because of the complexity of the new framework, more established members took on the responsibility of orienting newer attendees to make them feel less intimidated by the discussion. With help from the learning team, community leaders used their own words and stories to explain more abstract concepts like “social connections” and “concrete supports.” These supportive environments helped members who were less vocal feel more comfortable speaking up. These actions provide some evidence of how community members were able to take funder-driven concepts and translate them into their own lived experience. As a result, Best Start contractors began to develop LBD guidelines and processes, such as root cause analysis, that tapped into community members’ experiences to help them understand theoretical concepts and effectively use them in their decision-making.





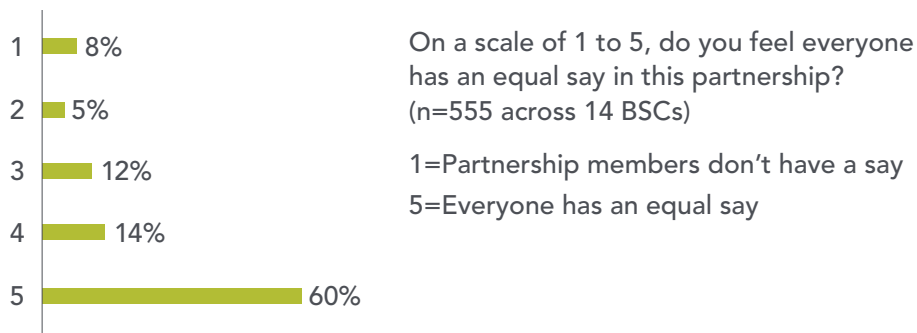
- **Strengthened facilitation and presentation skills:** The LBD process gave many partnership members an opportunity to hone their facilitation and public speaking skills. This is especially true in those BSCs that used parent cafés as a method for gathering more community feedback and making decisions. In these instances, parents facilitated table discussions during partnership meetings. Other examples include community members presenting data and indicators as well as sharing LBD updates with the broader partnership. As one stakeholder explained, “Having community members explain the target population to the guidance body and the partnership helps them [residents] understand the information better.” As more people speak up, Best Start staff and contractors noticed more dynamic community meetings. One Best Start staff observed, “More people are talking. Some of them have really become active during the LBD process. They found a voice.” A community member shared, “We have learned to express ourselves, to not be scared or ashamed or nervous about expressing ourselves.”

“**MORE PEOPLE ARE TALKING. SOME OF THEM HAVE REALLY BECOME ACTIVE DURING THE LBD PROCESS. THEY FOUND A VOICE.**”

COMMUNITY MEMBER

- **Making data-informed decisions:** A key indicator of learning and adapting is the ability to make data-informed decisions, and community members increased their capacity in this area. The learning team shared community-specific data for each core result and facilitated discussion with community members to identify priorities for their community. Community members grew increasingly more comfortable and astute in discussing, interpreting and using data for planning purposes. For instance, they inquired about how survey questions were structured, what languages were used to administer the surveys, and whether samples were representative of their communities. When available data was insufficient to guide decision-making or community members wanted to confirm their interpretation, a few communities took on the task of gathering more information from the broader community. With support from the learning team, they developed their own questions and collected their own data by administering surveys. In other cases, the Resident Outreach Coordinators performed this task with guiding questions from community members. The learning team also trained and coached many community members in presenting data to the broader partnership and to create a shared understanding of community conditions based on the data.

EXHIBIT 8 Partnership Influence & Voice



³⁹ Parent café (or world café) is an activity that involves community members answering and discussing key questions based on a particular topic (e.g. core result). Each discussion station focuses on an issue and allows parents to share their personal experience as well as any relevant data. As community members move to the next station, they are able to discuss the issue and build upon what they have learned from previous discussions. At the end, a large group discussion is held to “share out” what members learned about their community neighborhood.” Teachers College Record, 116, 1-42.



KEY FINDING: Best Start Community Partnership members are eager to lead and assume more ownership of the community building process

Both the Best Start experience and the literature on place-based initiatives suggest that effective community governance structures require substantial guidance and time to grow. Evaluations of other place-based initiatives suggest that building effective governance structures takes at least 2 to 3 years⁴⁰ and typically includes: getting the right diversity of people to the table, setting up leadership structures that have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and establishing practices that allow for transparent and democratic participation. Some place-based initiatives, for instance, may devise structures and practices to make sure residents' voice and influence are not overshadowed by service providers and other community leaders.⁴¹ By supporting the development of robust governance, partnership-level capacity building encourages collaboration, reduces confusion and conflicts, and promotes shared vision and – ultimately – community ownership.⁴²

Findings from the mid-term learning report indicated many community members were able to gain some leadership skills through the LBD process and have an appetite for more capacity building and meaningful community ownership. As a result of these mid-term reflections, important adjustments were made to refocus attention on capacity building and to create spaces and opportunities for community members to lead the process. The Learning Team made a deliberate shift to a coaching model that builds leadership and supports community ownership. Indicators of progress for the subsequent months are outlined below:

- **Increased community participation in co-designing and agenda-setting:** Since the release of the mid-term report, evaluators observed a shift in all Community Partnerships in the level and quality of community participation and leadership. This included the active involvement of community members in both the co-design and debriefing processes. In some communities, this was accomplished by including community members on the learning team. In others, much of the planning discussions were moved from the learning team to the leadership/guidance bodies, LBD workgroups and “community learning teams.” For instance, in an effort to foster a more reflective culture, community input was often included in the debrief sessions after each partnership meeting, and the community input was used to inform the design and agenda-setting for subsequent meetings.
- **Improved governance structure for broader participation:** In some communities, the learning team helped the partnership refine their governance. This resulted in smaller structures or committees with more clarity about areas of responsibility and the decision-making process. A stronger governance structure also allowed community members to take on leadership roles and perform functions that were previously done by Best Start contractors. For instance, in most partnerships, community members started to facilitate partnership meetings. The learning team, including facilitators (who used to perform this function) supported these members through training, coaching, rehearsing, and developing presentation materials. This allowed community members to reinforce the skills they learned and gained the confidence to participate equally with Best Start contractors in the co-design and implementation of the LBD planning process.

⁴⁰ Chaskin, 2000; FSG Social Impact Advisors, 2011; Fiester, 2011, to name a few.

⁴¹ Brown, 2011 [Cite from H+CO, p. 10.]

⁴² Fiester, L. (2011). “Good Neighborhoods, Good Schools, and Skillman’s Strategy for Place-based Change.” Report to the Skillman Foundation. In press.



“THEY [CONTRACTORS] ARE DOING THIS PROCESS THAT WE AS COMMUNITY MEMBERS COULD HAVE DONE OURSELVES. IT’S TAKING POWER AWAY FROM THE COMMUNITY. WHAT’S OUR PURPOSE? IT’S SAD THAT SOMEONE ELSE IS GETTING PAID FOR IT WHEN WE CAN BE LEADERS.”

BEST START COMMUNITY MEMBER

- **Increased discussion about decision-making and accountability:** More recently, with the release of Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for contractors to implement the strategies identified by the partnerships during the LBD process, First 5 LA created space for more community ownership by involving partnership members in the interview process. Including the community in the contractor vetting process will be important in building early community buy-in and mutual expectations of collaboration and accountability. It also represents a new and community-responsive practice for First 5 LA. While this is still a work in progress, observations show that there are early indications that community members and First 5 LA are working to better understand and articulate how to ensure accountability and that strategies are implemented as intended.
- **Assuming more ownership of the partnerships.** Both DE observations and more recent focus groups with BSC stakeholders confirmed that promoting capacity building and making room for leadership development increased community ownership of the partnerships. This was evident in the increase in their attendance at partnership meetings and promotion of other Best Start activities. As one Best Start contractor stated, “There were three events in one day [for the BSC]. The community took on the ownership to commit people to each event. We’re seeing more and more of that. Attendance has increased because of their own promotion. We’ve seen them be more vocal at commissions meetings, and they’ve been champions of their own cause.” A parent, who had come to Best Start out of a sense of isolation, summed up her transformation this way: “I don’t live my life for myself anymore. I am Best Start too. I want to help people. I feel responsible for people.”

EXHIBIT 9 Collective Action





KEY FINDING: Best Start Community Partnerships are translating new knowledge and skills into collective action

The transformation described in the previous section is a common story across Best Start Communities and many community members were leading and engaging in collective action in a variety of ways. Using Best Start as a platform, many community members began to see themselves as a resource for the broader community. There were notable examples in each community where, in addition to the rigorous and intense LBD planning process, community members came together to act on other issues and priorities in their community. While the partnerships brought many community members together, sometimes they channeled their collective energy to support existing community engagement efforts. Findings from the community reflective session in early 2015 suggested that a large majority of partnership members felt that there were opportunities to make a difference in how the broader community supports families (see Exhibit 10). Beyond their work with Best Start, community members organized community events and awareness campaigns, developed better educational resources for children, forged better relationships with law enforcement, beautified parks and gardens, volunteered for community events and joined local organizing campaigns that focused on transportation issues and immigration reform.

The following table provides examples of various types of collective actions that Best Start community members engaged in or initiated. For many community members, these collective actions created an important sense of accomplishment and helped solidify and promote their identity as Best Start leaders.

“BSC MEMBERS ARE PART OF A LARGER MOVEMENT... TO BRING ALL THESE COMMUNITIES TOGETHER ON BIGGER POLICY ISSUES. THEY BEGIN TO SEE THEMSELVES AS THE VOICE OF LA COUNTY.”

PARTNERSHIP MEMBER





EXHIBIT 10 Examples of Collective Action and Civic Engagement Across the 14 Best Start Communities

Best Start Community	Collective Action Efforts
Broadway-Manchester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built relationships with fire and police departments to leverage resources for community events Organized schools and churches to provide backpacks for children
Central Long Beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long Beach Child Abuse and Neglect Network, a Best Start Central Long Beach Collaborative, worked with city council to sign a resolution recognizing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month
Compton/East Compton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteered and/or raised money for WIC Back to School Immunization Health Fair and the Sacred Heart Church 5K Run/Walk Created comprehensive decision-making process that were acknowledged and adapted by local organizations
East LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on better utilization of green spaces in the community that prioritized community involvement and partnership participation Participated in and fiscally sponsored community events like Día de los Niños Developed outreach plans for populations under-represented in the partnership
Lancaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized Family Fun Day to provide more free family friendly activities in Lancaster
Metro LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a resource guide that BSC parents used to refer their friends and neighbors to local services Supported local campaigns around Medi-Cal funding and the density of alcohol retailers, leading to more collaboration with city councilman's office Raised money to support families in need, such as family members who had become disabled or lost loved ones Initiated their own Facebook page to connect with each other and share events and resources
Northeast Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with local groups to put on community events, such as Summer Fest
Palmdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invited local officials (mayor, city librarian, fire department) to partnership meetings to listen to residents and share resources with them Organized Family Fun Day event in Palmdale
Panorama City & Neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created and distributed the Ready for Kinder workbook in both English and Spanish to increase literacy skills for preschool children
South El Monte/El Monte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with local community based organizations to create workshops that build parenting and leadership capacities Marched in Sacramento to advocate for universal preschool access Participated in and contributed support to local community events like The Children's Parade
Southeast LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with Department of Mental Health to bring workshops to parents in the community on positive parenting and stress management Participated in advocacy to increase funding for schools and improve services in the community
Watts-Willowbrook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided input to local organizations on new parks, community gardens, and outdoor spaces
West Athens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged local agencies to advocate for better access and service coordination Advocated to county supervisor's office for field trips for seniors in the community Participated in West Athens/Westmont Community Task Force, that includes local elected officials, law enforcement, churches and schools Participated in local marches for peace to discourage violence and bring community together
Wilmington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in PhotoVoice project to advocate for better food marketing policies Sponsored a local ShareFest Workday project to beautify alleyways with murals painted by residents



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Building Capacity and Fostering Community Ownership

The transition to the implementation phase of LBD provided another opportunity for reflection on how to increase community capacity and foster community ownership. The following capacity building opportunities and considerations emerged across various data sources and stakeholder groups.⁴³

- **Expand capacity and leadership opportunities to more community members:** While the learning teams made progress in transitioning to a support role, leadership and capacity building opportunities continued to be relatively limited to a small group of partnership members - specifically leadership groups. Providing capacity building opportunities for a select handful of community members may have had the unintended consequence of disempowering others and ultimately hindering sustainability efforts. Given that LBD was primarily a planning process that focused on making decisions rather than acting on them, nonvoting members in some Community Partnerships did not feel their voice mattered as much as those who had voting power. Another contractor commented, “I think a big component is getting people to understand that Best Start is not just the 100 people that go to the partnership or the 12 people on the guidance body, that it is actually a community movement, that all are welcome.” Some BSCs started re-examining their governance structure to provide broader and more transparent decision-making. Focus group participants also identified several capacity building areas for all community members, not just those in leadership. They included: advocacy, governance, conflict resolution, leveraging resources, budgeting, and even grant writing. The implementation phase of LBD may also provide opportunities for more community members to get involved and become leaders.

“A LOT OF CAPACITY BUILDING IS CONFINED TO THE LEADERSHIP MEETINGS. THEY ARE NOT BALANCING POWER AND EQUITY.”

BEST START CONTRACTOR

⁴³Based on DE-facilitated reflective sessions in the BSC focus groups with Best Start staff and contractors and DE observations.





- **Address basic infrastructure in partnerships to ensure community sustainability:** In some communities, it has been difficult to build capacity due to significant turnover among partnership and leadership members. One stakeholder explained, “We’ve tried to implement various interventions to get community leadership, but it hasn’t turned out as we had planned for various reasons. It is still a goal for these Community Partnerships to be self-sustaining, but I don’t see that the organization [First 5 LA] has shifted in a way to help them with that in the best way that it could.” DE observations found that some community members felt their leadership roles only went so far given the highly prescriptive nature of LBD and limited room for their input to influence the process. As a result, leaders in a few communities quit participating. This phenomenon has been particularly challenging in communities where there were no term limits or bylaws to elect new leaders, creating a leadership vacuum filled primarily by contractors and First 5 LA staff. Developmental evaluators observed some partnerships requesting to address the leadership problem. However, this request was sometimes put “on hold,” either intentionally or unintentionally, given the pressure to move through the LBD stages, complete worksheets and issue RFPs. A few communities also experienced significant turnover at the partnership level. As one stakeholder explained, “At the beginning, ROCs were charged with connecting community members to each other and inviting members to the Community Partnerships. Then people were not returning to the Community Partnerships. We found that [LBD] concepts were too confusing and we raised that to Best Start.”

While some communities were able to adjust and engage community members, other communities have still not been able to address the retention issue. DE observations also revealed that community members’ expression of dissent varied community by community. In some communities, leaders and partnership members have been very vocal about their criticisms and frustrations. In other communities, some of the most vocal and often long-time partnership members quit attending. The newer members may not have felt as empowered or inspired to voice their frustrations explicitly in front of a large group and instead chose to quit participating. One community member at the recent learning community in August 2015 remarked, “We keep bringing people in the front door and they are leaving out the back door.” Without stable partnership attendance, the “keepers of the vision” in these communities are the contractors and First 5 LA staff. In the coming months, it will be important to understand each community’s readiness to engage with the LBD contractor and move forward with implementation of strategies. Some communities may require a different level of capacity building and restoring of trust before issues such as governance and decision-making can be addressed.



- **Foster discussion about the role of race, equity, and power:** Many members in a few communities recognized that their partnership did not represent the racial diversity of the community. Yet, these communities had not been successful in reaching out to and retaining under-represented populations. They tended to have a strong track record of engaging Latina/o parents, but they were slowly making inroads into other communities of color. From ongoing DE observations as well as community reflective sessions, some members saw the need to broaden their engagement, while others were ambivalent, either because they were concerned that the partnership would lose the familial feel they enjoyed or they did not have a lot of experience working with members from other communities. Even in more diverse BSCs, there had been occasions of racial tension that surfaced during the LBD process that needed to be addressed. Many stakeholders believed that this is more than just a matter of improving outreach and representation, but that it requires deep and critical conversations about race and equity. This is a capacity building area that had not been fully addressed by First 5 LA. As one stakeholder noted, “I think the reason that we don’t go past certain points in the conversation with communities of color is because we’re not there as First 5 LA to help communities become more culturally savvy. That’s a capacity we as First 5 LA are lacking and we’re not able to support the partnership in true capacity building in that way.” The literature from the field acknowledges the importance of discussion about race, equity and power in place-based initiatives. The Aspen Institute notes that “When trying to change the systems that have kept people disempowered over time, a deep understanding of local history of race and class inequality is key to building powerful leadership and engaging people in communities,” and therefore, “Effectively making change in a place is about challenging and undoing those deep-rooted inequities.”⁴⁴ Addressing these significant inequities in marginalized communities requires many honest and uncomfortable conversations that take considerable facilitation skills. As difficult as the conversations may be, this capacity building area is essential to creating sustainable and positive community change.
- **Clarify the role of the partnership during the implementation phase:** As all BSCs transition into the implementation phase of LBD, a new LBD contractor will be selected to implement the strategies that BSC members identified. Partnership members (who hold the shared vision of these strategies) need to have a meaningful role during the implementation phase to ensure that strategies are implemented effectively and that Community Partnerships retain a sense of ownership and shared accountability.

⁴⁴ The Aspen Institute (2014). “Towards a Better Place: A Conversation about Promising Practices in Place-Based Philanthropy.”





In addition, program officers had been hands-off during the LBD planning process because of potential conflicts of interest. Their upcoming role managing the LBD contractors may cause confusion, and some stakeholders expressed concern that the work will once again be more funder-driven, stating that this posed a “danger of regression.” A few BSCs asked to include requirements in the RFP for the selected contractor to involve partnership or community members in various ways. Many community members also hoped that the involvement of parents and residents in the selection process would lead to the identification of a contractor who has a good understanding of community engagement or even demonstrated history of working with the BSC. However, the focus on community ownership needs to extend beyond the RFP and selection processes into contract negotiation, implementation, and evaluation. A strict focus on contract requirements and deliverables may not be enough to maintain and promote community ownership. A deliberate and meaningful discussion about roles, responsibilities and accountability needs to occur for partnership members, LBD contractors and First 5 LA as the LBD implementation begins. In addition, if the role of partnership members in the implementation remains unclear, it could undermine the goals of capacity building. In other words, if community members do not know what they are expected to do, they and the capacity builders will not know what skills or infrastructure they need to strengthen.

- **Clarify long-term goals of Best Start and First 5 LA’s commitment to the community:** Capacity building is an essential path to community ownership in place-based initiatives, but it needs to be complemented by trust between funder and community. LBD was not the first planning process for the BSCs, and its introduction was met with some skepticism. For many partnership members it represented another funder-driven change that disregarded previous planning efforts and collective actions. During the process, the language of the new framework as well as mid-course adjustments (while sometimes necessary and beneficial) sometimes confused and frustrated community members. While funders of place-based initiatives often have “ultimate and periodic decision-making power,” it can undermine efforts to promote community ownership.⁴⁵ When funders shift parameters often, the role of the community members and what they have authority to decide on is confusing and can lead to distrust. Recent changes, like the phasing out of the learning team (facilitators in particular), caught many community members by surprise. In addition, the length of time it has taken to release RFPs for each community makes some community members question whether their ideas and strategies from the LBD planning process will actually be implemented. As one community member stated in a community reflective session, “It was made to seem like this is ours - you have full ownership, we want you to take the lead. But then, in the past, we did work under that thinking, and it was kicked back out...And you’re dealing with groups of people who don’t like that. They already feel on the defense about outsiders who come in telling us how to do our community. So, when you start changing the game in the middle of the game, then that causes people to not want to be involved.” Community members cited “follow through” and “accountability,” as a means to rebuild this trust, and the LBD implementation is an opportunity to reiterate First 5 LA’s commitment to Best Start and community members. Some ideas for “follow through” and “accountability” include: an RFP that reflects the ideas and strategies developed by community members during the LBD process, timely selection of LBD contractors to begin implementation as soon as possible, and clear roles and responsibilities for partnership members during implementation.



ADVOCATING FOR BETTER POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT AFFECT YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

During the last 18 months, nearly all BSCs were actively engaged in advocating for improved access to services, increased resource allocations, or improved policies that directly impact their communities. Best Start Communities demonstrated their ability to coalesce around concerns affecting the community and advocate for change. For example, in **Best Start Wilmington**, residents and organizational representatives participated in a PhotoVoice project to highlight current nutrition concerns and food marketing policies in the area. Partnership members voted to use their regularly scheduled meeting to discuss concerns about fast food advertisements and their proximity to businesses and organizations frequented by families with young children. Participants brainstormed practical actions to help parents better understand their families' nutritional needs and ways to advocate for changes in food marketing practices.

The **Best Start Central Long Beach** Community Partnership has a strong history of mobilizing the community to focus on issues related to child abuse and neglect. Long Beach Child Abuse and Neglect Network (LBCANN), a collaborative of local organizations and parents/residents, was formed to address this community concern and recently presented a resolution to the Long Beach City Council that explicitly includes families with children ages 0-5 in citywide violence prevention initiatives and recognizes the importance of engaging in a comprehensive violence prevention plan that incorporates community-wide perspectives. The city council has since passed this resolution, illustrating the power of collaborations and community voice in shaping and influencing policy.

The **Best Start Metro LA** Community Partnership also mobilized community residents to influence urban development practices. When a land developer proposed plans to develop a nightclub selling alcohol within close proximity to local schools, Best Start Metro LA immediately assembled a community group to study the implications. They invited Council Member Gill Cedillo to their community meeting and were successful in sharing Best Start Metro LA's priorities, as well as potential alignment with the council member's policy agenda. Community members also met with the developer and voiced their concerns to the LA City Council. By activating social connections and quickly mobilizing community members, Best Start Metro LA was able to delay the process for at least 30 days while the LA City Council reviews the project and community concerns.



CONCLUDING REMARKS & CONSIDERATIONS

“Implementation of cross-sector, multi-partner, place-based initiatives is extraordinarily difficult. The range of issues, actors, relationships, and processes involved are many and complex. They are embedded in historical relations, contexts of inequality and shifting circumstance, and structural constraints that defy pre-planned linear progress and require a combination of strategic opportunism, alliance building, negotiation, flexibility, and significant resources (including money, time, leadership, organizational capacity and political leverage).”

CHASKIN (2000)

Despite the wealth of place-based knowledge and experience generated by funders, practitioners, and community advocates across the country, there is no golden playbook or well-articulated script for implementing and managing a publicly funded place-based initiative as large and complex as Best Start. The last 18 months produced a considerable amount of learning through both trial and error and the initiative has grown and evolved. At the funder-level, Best Start staff and contractors worked to refine and operationalize effective models, strategies, and practices while simultaneously learned to shift, adapt and respond to the unique and sometimes changing needs of each Best Start Community. At the community-level, parents, residents and organizational partners were demonstrating their commitment and desire to improve their neighborhoods while taking increased ownership of the community change process. This section briefly highlights key takeaways for First 5 LA and Community Partners to consider as they continue their important work together. Specifically, it highlights considerations for (1) First 5 LA's management of the Best Start initiatives (streamlining structures, defining its role as a funder, and strengthening communications); (2) building capacity and catalyzing networks and social connections; (3) fostering a deeper understanding about the role and impact of race, equity and power in place-based work, (4) identifying pathways to community ownership.

Potential Actions

- Develop a communications strategy to ensure that new decisions and processes are messaged to all stakeholders in a consistent, timely, and clear way.
- Identify ways to facilitate more efficient and fluid channels for communicating with community leaders that don't have access to computers or internet. This might include lending old laptops to help facilitate communication and planning.
- Develop a communications toolkit to help Partnerships develop communication skills, strategies, and messaging.

Management of the Best Start Initiative

- **Identify opportunities to streamline structures and define the funder role:** The implementation of place-based efforts is intrinsically influenced by a funder’s structure, organizational culture and assumptions about what it takes to effect community change. The literature on place-based initiatives highlights the importance of flexible structures and adaptive leadership as well as more intentionality among funders about how they define their role, implement the work, and learn from it.⁴⁶ During the last few years, First 5 LA has come to realize the complexities of public sector structures that are often ill-suited for work that requires a high-level of a flexible and nimble approach. The Best Start department has reflected on ways to incorporate a more adaptive leadership model that focuses on learning, transparency, inclusion and partnership. This is still a work in progress, but feedback from various stakeholders suggested that lessons learned are being used to make adjustments, improve interdepartmental processes, and strengthen relationships with Community Partnerships. More recently, the Best Start department began to more openly share and discuss First 5 LA’s structure and decision-making process with the Best Start Community Partnerships. While the organization’s operational structure may have seemed complex and confusing, community members wanted to better understand how decisions were made and where there were opportunities to influence process, decisions, and practices. First 5 LA should continue to explore opportunities to demystify the organization’s structure and help develop the skills of residents and parents to effectively engage with First 5 LA and other public institutions. In addition, the organization may wish to assess the extent to which certain organizational policies, practices and procedures can be refined or modified to better meet the dynamic needs of place-based work.
- **Implement a communications strategy to improve internal and external communications:** Communications within any place-based initiative and the broader community requires considerable thought and attention. Throughout the Best Start initiative there have been many bumps in the road, ranging from a lack of clarity about purpose, roles, and processes, to finding a common and meaningful language to discuss complex concepts in ways that are understandable and accessible to diverse stakeholders. While communication has improved through the integration of efforts, stakeholders (staff, contractors and community partners) noted ongoing challenges with the timeliness, messaging, and ways information is shared with staff, contractors and BSCs.

Focus group participants identified the need to improve both internal (within First 5 LA) and external communications and suggested that more needs to be done to communicate in transparent, consistent, and non technical ways. In the past year, increased attention has been given to removing the jargon from language and consulting with community members to help translate concepts and messages into relatable language. This will likely be an ongoing challenge. It is compounded by the unresolved tension between the use of community-friendly language and the desire to build capacity to engage with formal institutions and advocate for the needs of their children and communities. As one Best Start program officer noted, “We hope the community can speak our language as well [...] We need to both explain the jargon and use community-friendly language – it’s a push and pull effect.” Other staff members acknowledged the need “to improve internal channels of communications which is hard because everything happens so quickly.” Feedback clearly suggests the need to develop and implement communication strategies and mechanisms to strengthen both internal and external communications.



Learning

Transparency

Partnership

Communication

Race, Equity &
Power Dynamics

⁴⁶ “Best Practices in Place-Based Initiatives: Implications for the Implementation and Evaluation of Best Start (2011).” Prepared for First 5 LA by Harder+Company and Juarez Associates.



Continue to build capacity and catalyze social networks and connections

Participants stressed the need to expand the reach of Best Start and continue to support capacity building efforts of community members and the partnerships. This includes building the capacity of more community members to engage in data-informed decision-making, advocate for resources and family-centered policies, and participate in collective efforts to improve their communities. Best Start Partnership members have made considerable progress but more work is still needed to expand beyond the core group of leaders. Additionally, building the capacity to engage with formal institutions and organizations can help broaden the social networks to include other stakeholders, supporters and organizational partners that help advance the work. Numerous examples of this were highlighted in this report, including stories of partnerships engaging with elected officials to voice their concerns and advocate for their communities. Still more can be done to help partnerships effectively leverage their networks and connect with other organizations, funding streams, and resources that share similar community or systems change agendas.

Respectfully foster deeper understanding about race, equity and power

Issues of race, power, and equity are tenaciously woven into the fabric of disadvantaged neighborhoods and are often at the core of place-based work. The literature on place-based initiatives stresses the importance of understanding and fostering respectful conversations about race, equity, and power by listening, learning, and demonstrating a commitment to honest exchange.⁴⁷ These issues are complex and uncomfortable to discuss, but have continuously surfaced within Best Start Communities as well as in funder-community discussion about roles, expectations, and accountability. As with all place-based efforts, these discussions often give rise to underlying tensions, power dynamics, and conflicts about who is driving the process and making decisions.⁴⁸ In focus groups with staff and contractors, participants emphasized the need for a deeper understanding of equity, diversity, culture, and power dynamics both at the community-level and within First 5 LA. During a recent reflective session with Best Start staff, one program officer acknowledged that these issues, “often come up organically and you need to be prepared to deal with it; not just push it aside.” Other staff concurred saying, “I think we try to focus on ‘feel good’ things, protective factors and strengths-based things, that we don’t take the time to talk about things that are uncomfortable.” While some staff questioned whether it’s the funder’s role to initiate these conversations, most felt it was important, “to be prepared to address and work on these issues in the communities.” This could include providing training, technical assistance, and support in the community, but as one program officer stressed, “We don’t even talk about these things internally. Maybe we need to have this conversation with staff first ... it’s a timely subject and is long overdue.”

Potential Actions

- Expand efforts to build the leadership of a broader base of Best Start parents and residents.
- Expand efforts to increase resident advocacy skills and to effectively engage diverse partners and supporters in Best Start efforts.
- Provide staff training and/or facilitated discussion about the role of race, power, and equity in the context of place-based work.
- Provide community-level training and technical assistance to support respectful and crucial conversations about race, power, and equity.

Best Start staff also discussed the impact of funder-community power dynamics and the need to engage residents and parents in meaningful ways to improve their communities. As one staff member noted “We need a conversation about power in these communities or it will remain status-quo.” It’s a conversation about how to build power, together, and Best Start provides a space for that to happen.

⁴⁷ Brown et al., 2001

⁴⁸ Ibid



Clearly articulate pathways to decision-making and community ownership

During the past year, the concept of community ownership has been a hot topic among Best Start stakeholders. Like so many terms, community ownership can mean different things to different people and is complicated by tensions about who has the power, resources, influence, and authority to determine priorities and make decisions. The literature on place-based initiatives emphasizes the importance of clarity in this area, stressing that the way a funder engages and treats residents in the initial stages of an initiative will set the tone for the entire enterprise. As part of a reflective session with Best Start staff, one program officer acknowledged the need to be clear about opportunities for Best Start Communities to influence decisions and opportunities to actually make them. There are certain decisions that need to be made by the funder, but those decision-making parameters have not been clear. Some staff and contractors talked about the issue of autonomy, suggesting that First 5 LA create more space, support, and resources for BSCs to move their own work forward. One person noted, “If they want to meet on their own they should be able to. They should be able to put in requests for resources and receive them. That’s the kind of autonomy that they need, capacity building.” Another participant explains the need for communities to have a voice in decision-making, “The only way is to allow time and space and resources for the community members to build on their work. A community can have a plan, but then they are pushed to accomplish some First 5 LA goal. There has to be some kind of flexibility. They should be part of the decision-making.” Best Start staff openly acknowledged these issues and spoke of “emerging intentionality around an engagement plan that spells out decision-making.” In fact, the department is looking for opportunities to engage a recently formed “transition team” advisory group (made up of representatives from each community) to discuss this and other critical topics.

Concluding Remarks

Despite the many inherent challenges of place-based work, Best Start has continued to harness the energy of diverse stakeholders who are deeply committed to building stronger families and vibrant communities. The developmental evaluation of Best Start was designed to document and elevate key insights from this dynamic and ever-evolving effort. Throughout this process, First 5 LA and the Community Partnerships have continuously demonstrated a willingness and ability to listen, reflect, adapt, and translate learning into new approaches, strategies and actions. At the core of this work is trusting relationships, stronger social connections, and the desire to engage in genuine and meaningful collaboration. Reflecting on the challenges and strengths discussed in this report can help improve communication, clarify decision-making processes, engage community leaders as equal partners, build capacity toward community ownership, and address the deeply rooted issues of race, equity, and power.

Potential Actions

- Develop decision-making guidelines with community input and discuss guidelines with the BSCs to ensure greater clarity about the parameters of how and why decisions are made, and by whom.

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Incorporated in 1952, Special Service for Groups (SSG) is a nonprofit multi-service agency that serves some of the hardest-to-reach populations throughout Southern California. Our Research and Evaluation (R&E) Team works with other nonprofit organizations, grant makers, public sector agencies and community members to collect and analyze information they need for planning and action. We believe that information is power, and we invest in developing these research skills within our communities. R&E specializes in engaging diverse community members throughout all phases of research in order to leverage their expertise and ensure that research findings are responsive to community needs. www.ssgresearch.org



Early Care and Education Policy and Advocacy Fund

Program and Planning Committee Meeting

January 28, 2016



Presentation Overview

- Overview of First 5 LA's Early Care and Education Priorities
- First 5 LA's Policy and Advocacy Investments to Date
- Investing in Early Care and Education Policy and Advocacy Moving Forward

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First 5 LA's Strategic Plan

Our Mission

All children in Los Angeles County enter Kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life

Our Strategic Investments

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Family Strengthening

Communities

Health

Early Care and Education

Early Care and Education Strategy

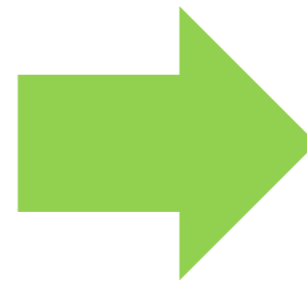
Issue Areas

Public Funding

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Workforce



Goal

LA County has quality early care and education opportunities available to all children 0-5

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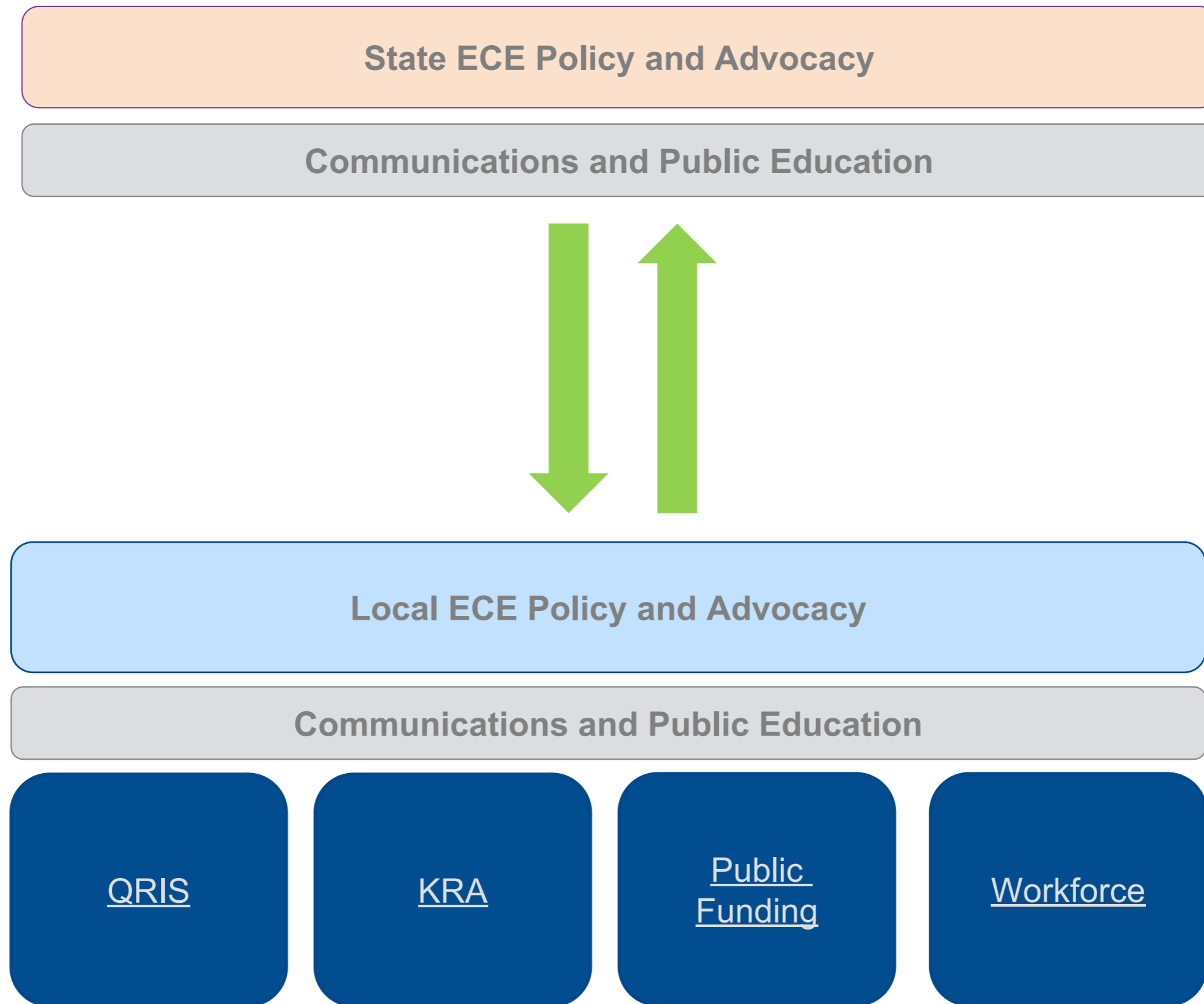
The Need for Advocacy

- State investment in early learning is lower than pre-recession levels
- Local Education Agencies have competing demands for limited resources
- Government agencies consistently ask for advocate support in developing and implementing new policies and practices
- A unique policy window is opening with state and local decision-makers

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An Overarching ECE Strategy

Parent and Community Engagement



Policy and Advocacy Fund (PAF)

- Launched in 2011 to support advocacy related to the 2010-15 strategic plan
 - Evolution of the Community Opportunities Fund (COF), which directed \$15.4M to advocacy-related activities
- Administered in two cycles, with final grant expiration in 2018
- Provided more than \$10M to 23 grantees to execute specific projects related to the prior strategic plan

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Lessons Learned

- PAF investments were planned and executed separately from First 5 LA's program investments
- First 5 LA's advocacy efforts were not coordinated with PAF projects
- PAF projects were not coordinated across grantees
- PAF supported discrete projects, not movement building

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Advocacy Funding in the Future

- Policy and systems change strategies will be embedded in First 5 LA's initiatives moving forward
- Additional funding will be requested to support advocacy partners and projects when necessary to achieve First 5 LA goals
- Advocacy funding will be coordinated with program investments

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What does this mean for ECE?

1. All new programs and initiatives are addressing policy, systems change, sustainability, leveraging, and impact
2. We will recommend supporting advocacy projects where the initiative will help advance specific goals

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Existing ECE Advocacy Efforts

- **State Coalitions:** ECE Budget Coalition, Early Learning Collaborative
- **Local Coalitions:** Grade Level Reading, LAPAI, Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Coalition, LA Compact, LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment
- **Specific projects:** Best Start Community Partnership ECE projects, Advancement Project parent advocacy initiative

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Advocacy Funding Best Practices

- Support key advocacy partners with core capacity building and partnership grants
- Fund specific project proposals over time to advance policy goals
- Create a structure which allows flexibility to respond to emerging needs and encourages coordination among grantees and partners

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ECE Policy and Advocacy Fund

- 2015-16 First 5 LA Budget and Long Term Financial Plan assume \$15M to support early learning advocacy activities through 2020
- Dedicate initial set of funds to support multi-year partnership grants
- Work with an external organization (“intermediary”) to serve as a fiscal and administrative coordinator
- Reserve remaining funds for responsive projects over the course of the strategic plan

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Planned Timeline

February through April

- Return to the Commission for further information and action
- Continue developing ECE PAF structure, with particular focus on formal learning plans
- Develop solicitation and select intermediary to help refine and implement ECE PAF

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May through June

- Work with intermediary to finalize structure, develop solicitation to select advocacy partners

Summer 2016

- Select advocacy partners, execute agreements, and distribute initial funding at the beginning of the 2016-17 fiscal year

Additional Activities

- Continue working with funders and other partners to improve advocacy collaboration and coordination
- Support strategy development for all First 5 LA ECE initiatives
- Advance local, state, and federal ECE policy agenda

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Questions?



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Strategic Communications Overview

Program and Planning
Committee

January 28, 2016



First5LA.org

Presentation Overview

- Strategic Communications in Context
- Our Approach, Goals and Objectives
- Communications Activities Underway
- Future Work

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Our Approach

First 5 LA recognizes that every mode, medium and method in which we communicate – on our own or in partnership with external groups – is an opportunity to advance the programmatic and policy goals of the Strategic Plan.

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Communications in Context

As one of the six investment areas identified and approved by the Board as part of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, communications is identified as a primary investment strategy for achieving First 5 LA's target outcomes.

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Communications as a Vehicle

- **Policy and Systems Change:** Including raising awareness, identifying champions and supporters, building coalitions, building public and political will and advancing policy and systems change
- **Behavioral Change:** Including awareness, changing social norms, changing attitudes and beliefs which will advance behavior change.

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How We Are Using Communications

We are using communications to:

- Build our Brand
- Engage Decision Makers
- Elevate Awareness and Create Urgency
- Support Internal Communications

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Building Our Brand

Establishing First 5 LA's brand as a leading early childhood advocate

- Refreshing our brand, internally and externally
- Event and Conference sponsorships
- Building a parenting website
- Creating a Speakers' Bureau
- Brand ambassador trainings
- Creating and maintaining partnerships

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Engaging Decision Makers

Elevate the quantity and quality of coverage of early care and education issues.

- LA Partnership for Early Childhood Education investments in KPCC and New America Media

Digital Campaigns to elevate awareness of decision makers and opinion leaders

- Videos
- Social Media
- Website
- Newsletters

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Elevating Awareness

- Public awareness campaign to engage parents and caregivers
- Partnering with Best Start Community Partnerships to engage community groups and leaders

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Creating Urgency

- Partnering with other funders on joint communications activities
- Supporting integration of communications activities in all First 5 LA efforts and initiatives

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Learning and Adjusting

- Integrating First 5 LA's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework to ensure formal learning is incorporated into all communications projects.
- Using this framework's activities to ensure we have the greatest impact possible.

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Work Underway

Internal Communications

- Brand ambassador and social media trainings for staff
- Development of internal newsletter
- Communications capacity building of grantees

External Communications

- “Early Childhood Matters” launch of revised external newsletter to engage decision makers and opinion leaders
- Launch of parenting website to meet needs identified by research, build our brand among parents and caregivers

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What's Next

Public Awareness Campaign to Engage Parents and Caregivers on the Protective Factors

- Presentation to Program and Policy Committee in February

Retaining Strategic Marketing and Communications Agency

- RFQ responses now under consideration
- Recommendations to Board at March Commission Meeting

Potential Communications Investments in Development

- Center for Health Reporting, in partnership with the First 5 Association, for statewide stories with local impact
- Center for Health Journalism investment for local stories

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Questions?



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Thank you.



Defining Strategic Communications

“Communication” is the act of communicating. It is the exchange of thoughts, feelings information and ideas between individuals and groups.

“Communications” is the mode, medium and method used for communicating, such as one-on-one engagement, digital and social media campaigns, email, events, radio and TV ads.

“Strategic” describes how we will thoughtfully design and plan our communications to serve our objectives.

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FIRST 5 LA

SUBJECT: Project DULCE Implementation Update

BACKGROUND:

The overarching goal of First 5 LA's Focusing for the Future: 2015-2020 Strategic Plan is to ensure that children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. Knowing that a child's success in school and life starts at the earliest moments, parents represent the most critical relationship to a child's development. When skills and supports — known as the Protective Factors — are present, parents/caregivers are able to create nurturing, responsive, stable relationships and learning environments for their children, and as a result child outcomes improve. For this reason, parent engagement is a core element across the Commission's priority outcomes and strategic focus areas.

The Families Outcome focuses on increasing family Protective Factors:

- Parental resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Supports in Time of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

A priority focus area of this outcome involves improving the capacity of early care and education (ECE) and health-related providers to engage parents/caregivers in supporting their child's development. ECE and health-related settings are natural points of connection for families. These environments are non-stigmatizing, thereby creating a unique opportunity to reach families that may be relatively more isolated from the broader array of family support services. First 5 LA seeks to capitalize both on the ability of these environments to provide resources that increase Protective Factors and by piloting program models that have demonstrated impacts on improving Protective Factors. Therefore, one strategy to achieve this outcome is to pilot and/or promote the scaling of evidence-based parent/caregiver engagement practices and models that increase family Protective Factors in ECE and health-related settings.

On June 18, 2015, the Commission received a presentation on how two leading nationally recognized programs demonstrate the importance of parent engagement to increase family Protective Factors in health-related and ECE settings: (1) Project DULCE (Developmental Understanding and Legal Collaboration for Everyone) and (2) Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors. The presentation included information on the extensive experience of these two leading partners related to the important role parent engagement plays in increasing family Protective Factors. First 5 LA now has the opportunity to launch an expansion of Project DULCE that would provide various resources and support for new parents in a pediatric health care setting.

The long-term outcomes of the project will reflect positive changes at the community, provider, and individual participant level. At the community level, Project DULCE will enhance partnerships among health care providers, legal professionals, and other community resources to increase the coordination and quality of how services are accessed. For the providers, the program will develop strategies that reflect improved ability to identify families at risk of toxic stress. Lastly, individual participants will increase their connection to needed concrete supports and knowledge of child development, thereby fostering safe, healthy, and vibrant communities. In addition, because Project DULCE aims to increase the effectiveness and coordination of service delivery systems, build the knowledge base and skills of providers, and place a greater responsibility on the community to care

for families, it aligns with three of the six First 5 LA investment areas: 1) service delivery system improvement, 2) provider training, and 3) community capacity building.

DISCUSSION:

Project DULCE is a clinical intervention based on the Strengthening Families approach, which puts parent engagement as a foundation, designed to address infant/family risks and needs at the earliest possible stage and to partner with families to build strengths and capacities that foster optimal child health and development starting at birth. At its core, it is a practice change model that adapts the clinical/medical practice to improve service delivery and health outcomes.

The program provides parental support and information on developmental milestones, giving parents of newborns confidence in their capacity to be attuned to their child's needs. A Family Specialist meets the families within the patient-centered medical home at routine Well Baby visits for the newborn's first six months. The program is offered to all families receiving pediatric care at the site. The health center location provides a platform for parent engagement and opens the door to addressing basic needs of families, thereby removing barriers to accessing services. The program adapts and combines elements of two existing models: Healthy Steps and Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLP). The Family Specialist is trained in the evidence-based Healthy Steps curriculum, and adds a professional with knowledge of child development to a child's pediatric primary care team to support positive parenting through providing critical knowledge, modeling, ongoing support, referrals (when needed), optional home visits and a telephone line. The MLP supports families by providing legal advice, consultations, and representation to address their civil legal needs. The Family Specialist is also trained through the MLP to identify legal and social needs that may affect a child's health and development and to take action either by helping the family advocate for themselves, or by referring them to an appropriate public health, legal, or social service agency or resource.

Evaluation Findings

A randomized control trial¹ conducted in Boston showed that the Project DULCE intervention led to improvements in preventive health care delivery and indicated increased utilization of concrete supports among families. A few key results from the program include:

- Intervention infants were more likely to have completed their six month immunization schedule by age seven months.
- Intervention infants were more likely to have five or more routine preventive care visits by age 1 year.
- Intervention infants were less likely to have visited the emergency department by age six months.
- Intervention accelerated access to concrete resources

The Opportunity to Promote the Scaling of the Project DULCE Model

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) reached out to First 5 LA and offered the opportunity to participate in the replication design of the Project DULCE model and has included up to 80% of the funds needed for one replication site. The replication calls for a triad of partners including an Early Childhood Systems Lead, the Medical Partner Lead, and the Legal Partner Lead (Law firm engaging in Medical/Legal Partnership with one or more clinics). First 5 LA has the opportunity to represent one of five jurisdictions across the country to launch an expansion of this project. The new sites are bicoastal: Morrisville, VT, Palm Beach, FL, Orange County, CA, Alameda County, CA and Los Angeles County, CA. All three early childhood systems leads in California are First 5 Commissions.

The replication plan involves the engagement of a triad of partners in the five jurisdictions to revisit the original programmatic components and make adjustments as needed to increase program

quality and applicability to the diverse geographic service environments and communities. The original program components will remain the same through the early phases of implementation: at each Well-Baby visit a Family Specialist will provide education on developmental milestones and addresses families' basic needs. This will also include in-person or phone follow-ups. In addition, families will be provided consultation with the Family Specialist and the legal partner on challenges related to accessing basic supports and services, if needed. Replication will include refinements to the model to make improvements and take into account the unique needs of the new geographic areas. For example, in the pilot, basic needs addressed by the MLP focused on food, housing and energy insecurity. The replication process will allow for a revisiting of these priorities to ensure they meet the needs of the new jurisdictions.

The opportunity to participate in the replication design of Project DULCE is significant for First 5 LA. Through this partnership we are informing the health care field and aiming to build a lasting foundation for promoting and supporting the protective factors at the individual and relationship level (family and community). First, it provides the opportunity for Los Angeles County to join other First 5 Commissions and national partners in redesigning, implementing, testing, and expanding a preventive pediatric care practice change model across diverse geographic service environments and communities based on significant results established in a prior randomized control trial. Second, it brings training, technical assistance, and ongoing support to the partners while also providing learning and leadership opportunities on a national platform level for First 5 LA. Lastly, this investment leverages funds from CSSP and engages multiple partners to coalesce commitment to the success of this project.

Potential Partners

In order to participate in the redesign and pilot phase, and meet the implementation timeline set forth by CSSP, First 5 LA needed to identify partners that had an existing MLP. In addition, First 5 LA needed to identify partners that provided pediatric care to 300 – 500 infants annually as the target set by CSSP for the pilot replication is 200 (300-500 will allow for missed clients, while still being an appropriate caseload for a single Family Support Specialist). First 5 LA staff utilized the National Center for Medical Legal Partnership Database and the 2014 Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development data to identify potential partners, which yielded two MLPs that partner with clinics serving the targeted population, Greater Long Beach Community MLP and Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles Medical-Legal Community Partnership. These two MLPs provide the supports outlined in the Project DULCE model to three clinics that serve the requisite number of infants in LA County. First 5 LA contacted both MLPs regarding participating in this project. The Greater Long Beach MLP consisting of The Legal Aid Foundation and The Children's Clinic expressed immediate interest and readiness to partner with First 5 LA to launch Project DULCE. As such, at the February Commission meeting staff will bring forth a justification request to enter into a Strategic Partnership with The Children's Clinic. First 5 LA is still in discussion with Neighborhood Legal Services and the two respective clinics to gauge their interest in participating in this opportunity. Staff will have an update on this potential partnership at the February Commission Meeting and will bring forth a request to enter into a Strategic Partnership with one or both clinic sites, if necessary.

Program implementation and service delivery is expected to begin by May 2016 for the initial partner sites and continue through June 30, 2020, the length of the current Strategic Plan. Upon the execution of contracts with CSSP and the participating Medical Legal Partnerships, the health and legal partners will assign staff to the project and hire and train the Family Specialist. During the early

phases of the project, First 5 LA and its local partners will convene periodically to make critical design and evaluation decisions.

As previously noted, First 5 LA can choose to expand the project informed through implementation learning. With the approval of the current Strategic Plan, the Board endorsed cost projections that allowed for up to five total, geographically diverse sites in Los Angeles County. By expanding the number of sites First 5 LA will be able to capitalize on the learnings from implementation at the initial sites and gather enough data to support policy and advocacy efforts for broader expansion and for informing the early childhood development preventive care field. It is important to note that additional sites would require support for the development of new MLPs.

Financials at a Glance

CSSP is providing up to \$105,000 to support the program at one site for the first year. The below tables represent First 5 LA’s estimated contribution needed to implement the program at one or more sites for the first year of implementation:

Site 1	
CSSP	\$105,000
F5LA Match	\$ 45,000
Total	\$150,000

Potential Additional Sites	
CSSP	\$ 0
First 5 LA	\$150,000
Total	\$150,000

F5LA	
Site 1	\$ 45,000
Site 2	\$150,000
Total	\$195,000

The above calculations are based on annual costs of the project. However, the cost of the program implementation (through June 30, 2017 – a 17 month contract) will be approximately \$212,500 for each site. Accurate figures for the first 17 months of implementation for each site will be shared in February as part of the recommendation to the Commission. Budgets for additional program years will be shared with Commissioners as part of the Consent Calendar process.

NEXT STEPS:

At the February 2016 Commission meeting, staff will seek approval from the First 5 LA Commission to:

1. Authorize First 5 LA staff to receive up to \$105,000 in funding from CSSP,
2. Authorize First 5 LA staff to execute a contract with CSSP for First 5 LA to launch Project DULCE in Los Angeles County, and
3. Enter into Strategic Partnerships with up to three clinics to launch Project DULCE in Los Angeles County and authorize staff to execute these contracts.

¹ Sege, R., Preer, G., Morton, SJ., Cabral, H., Morakinyo, O., Lee, V., Abreu, C., De Vos, E., Kaplan-Sanoff, M. (2015). Medical-Legal Strategies to Improve Infant Health Care: A Randomized Trial. *Pediatrics*, 136 (1), pp1.

Project DULCE Implementation Update

January 28, 2016

Special Meeting of the Board of
Commissioners and Program
& Planning Committee

1ST  LA
first 5 la
Giving kids the best start

Purpose and Goals

- Project DULCE Refresher
- Update on a partnership opportunity to modify, pilot and test Project DULCE in Los Angeles County
- Provide an overview of next steps

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Project DULCE Overview

Developmental Understanding and Legal Collaboration for Everyone

- Enhances Well-Baby check-ups for the first six months
 - Family specialist at the clinic dedicated to the project links families to their communities
 - Universal approach
- Involves a triad of partners
 - Health Clinic
 - Law Firm
 - Medical Legal Partnership (MLP)
 - Early Childhood Systems

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Project DULCE Overview

Developmental Understanding and Legal Collaboration for Everyone

- Strengthens family protective factors
- Catalyzes preventive pediatric care practice change
- Demonstrated significant results in a randomized control trial
- Helps to promote and support the protective factors at the individual, community and systems level

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Strategic Plan Alignment

Strategic Plan

How Project DULCE aligns with First 5 LA's Strategic Approach

- Partner with others
- Parents at the center
- Focus on policy and systems change

Aligned Outcome: Increased Family Protective Factors

Focus Area

Improved capacity of Early Care and Education (ECE) and health-related providers to engage parents/caregivers in supporting their child's development

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Families Outcome

Strategy

Pilot and promote the scaling of evidence-based parent/caregiver-engagement models that increase family protective factors in ECE related and health-related settings

What we will do

Project DULCE Outcomes

- **Community** - enhances partnerships among health care providers, legal professionals and other community resources to increase the coordination and quality of services
- **Providers** – increases ability to identify and support families at risk of toxic stress
- **Individual participants** - increases connections to concrete supports and knowledge of child development

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A Partnership Opportunity

First 5 LA to participate in:

- Replication design
- Group of 5 jurisdictions nationally
- Leveraging of up to 80% of funds for one pilot site



Significance for First 5 LA

- Partner in redesigning, implementing, testing, and expanding a family engagement practice change that is new to Los Angeles County
- Provides training, technical assistance and ongoing support to partners
- Opportunity to expand to future sites
 - Capitalize on learnings from initial sites to inform expansion
 - Gather data and information to inform the field, policy and advocacy efforts
- Engages multiple partners to enhance program quality and learning opportunities

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Replication Plan in Los Angeles

Identifying Partners

- The National Center for Medical Legal Partnership National Database and 2014 Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development Data
 - 2 potential Medical Legal Partnerships (up to 3 clinic sites)

Implementation Approach

- Fidelity to program components in initial phase
- Partners will serve 200 families (infants) by April 2017

Possible Future Expansion

- With the Strategic Plan approval, the Board endorsed projected funding for up to five total sites
- Additional sites would require support for the development of new MLPs in Los Angeles County

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Next Steps

February Commission Meeting

Staff will seek approval from the First 5 LA Commission to:

- Authorize First 5 LA staff to receive up to \$105,000 in funding from CSSP
- Authorize First 5 LA staff to negotiate, sign and execute a contract with CSSP for First 5 LA to launch Project DULCE in Los Angeles County
- Approve Strategic Partnerships with one to three clinics to launch Project DULCE in Los Angeles County

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Further Thoughts

- 1) What additional aspects of the early implementation of Project Dulce are you interested in?
- 2) What points of integration with other First 5 LA investments are you most interested in?

