



# First 5 Contra Costa

## Strategic Plan & Long-Term Financial Plan

FY 16/17 – 19/20

*Approved October 5, 2015*



# Acknowledgements

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# About First 5

## Our Vision

Contra Costa’s young children will be healthy, ready to learn, and supported in safe, nurturing families and communities.

## Our Mission

To foster the optimal development of our children, prenatal through 5 years of age.

## Our Guiding Principles

First 5 Contra Costa’s investments and activities are guided by the following principles:

- **Equity.** We prioritize allocation of our resources to benefit families in greatest need in order to reduce disparities.
- **Community.** We honor and respect community voice and engage community members in respectful and meaningful ways.
- **Diversity.** We respect our diverse communities and strive to ensure all children have access to high-quality, culturally responsive services.
- **Sustainability.** We invest in systems, programs, and partnerships that create long-term impacts for children and families in the community.
- **Efficacy.** We invest in high-quality programs that use promising or evidence-based practices to ensure our investments create meaningful impacts.
- **Evaluation.** We measure our efforts and outcomes for continuous quality improvements and to ensure our investments achieve the intended results.

## Proposition 10

*In November 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, the California Children and Families First Initiative, which added a 50-cent per pack tax on cigarettes and tobacco products. Eighty percent of the tax revenue is disbursed to the 58 counties in California to **promote the early health, learning, and family support for children from the prenatal stage through five years of age.** The California Children and Families Commission augments County-specific efforts with statewide mass media campaigns, education for parents and providers, and research and evaluation activities.*

## First 5 Contra Costa Commission

*The Commission consists of 18 members who have the authority to administer and allocate Contra Costa County’s Prop 10 funds. Commissioners represent county government, public health, social services, education, and early care and education.*

# Building a Strong Foundation for Early Childhood

**Together with our partners, First 5 Contra Costa has been building stronger foundations for our county’s youngest children for more than 15 years.** With investments topping \$120 million, we have created effective programs and developed systems to ensure young children start kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. We have noted many successes along the way, such as the five First 5 Centers, a new system to improve child care quality, and the countywide use of a common screening tool to help all children reach their optimal development.

Through it all we have remained true to the spirit of Proposition 10: **investing** in the earliest years in order to save down the road; **promoting** programs with the highest likelihood of success; and effectively and responsibly **administering** tax revenues under the authority of an independent local Commission.

**The promise of Proposition 10 is paying off.** Fifteen years later, the inherent potential of early childhood investment is increasingly recognized by policymakers, the media, funders, and the public. The results of the brain science, program evaluation, and economic analysis of the last 30 years are now frequently cited in even the most routine discussion of early childhood policy. Even more, investment in early childhood is commonly pointed to as a key element in lifting families and children out of poverty. As the consensus for young children continues to grow, First 5 will play a key role in promoting the systems and policies that could be adopted statewide in the next five to ten years.

**Our FY 16/17 – 19/20 Strategic Plan builds on First 5’s past efforts, takes the changing fiscal landscape and community needs into consideration, and focuses our investments on strategic initiatives that build the systems, partnerships and policies that will have the most enduring impact on children’s health, education and well-being.** This new plan provides a road map to help First 5 navigate the ever-changing landscape in partnership with county agencies, community-based organizations, elected officials, First 5 participants, and other community members who share our vision of ensuring that Contra Costa’s youngest children are happy, healthy and thriving.

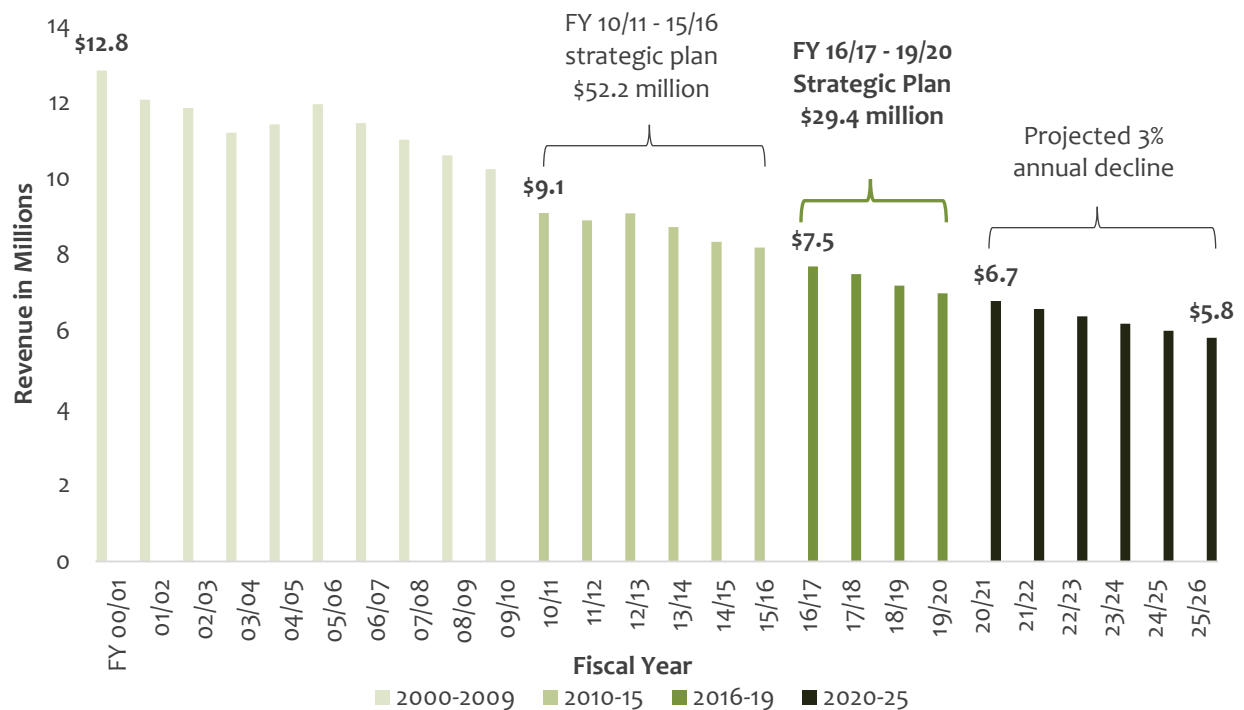
# Our Long-Term Financial Plan

First 5 Contra Costa’s Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP), provides a **framework to guide the Commission’s investments** during the FY 16/17 – 19/20 strategic plan. The LTFP does not name specific programs that will receive funding, nor does it obligate the Commission to actual contracts or funding awards. Rather, it describes First 5’s fiscal landscape and states the Commission’s intent to invest its resources in areas where it can exert influence and achieve lasting change.

## Our Fiscal Landscape

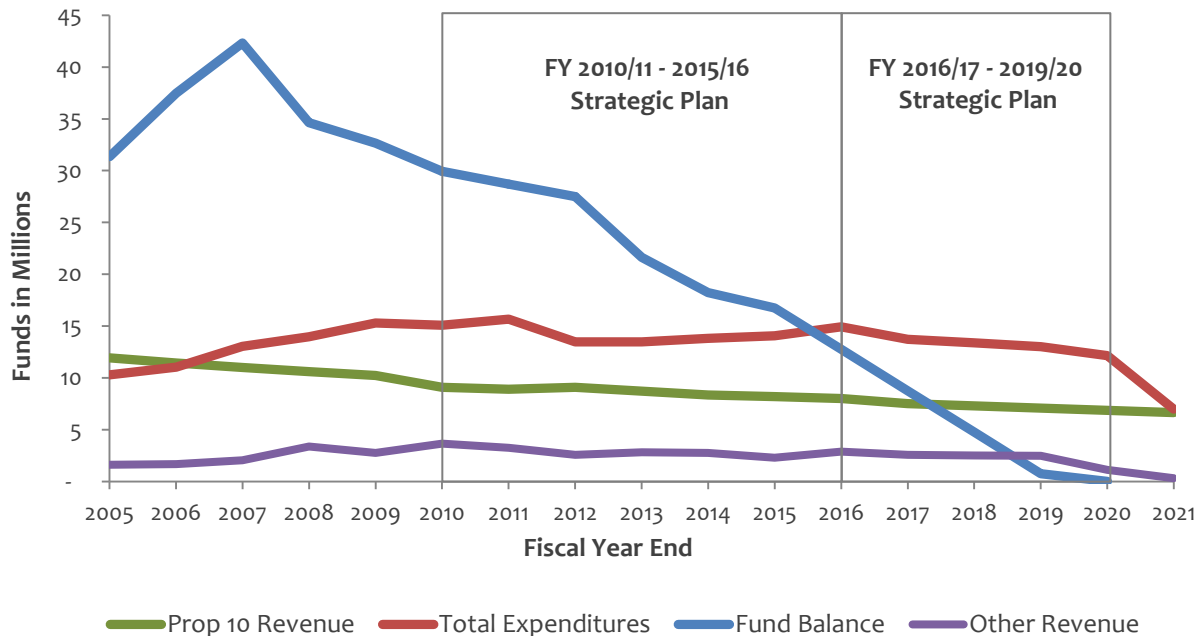
Looking ahead, our greatest challenge will be the **progressive decline of Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenue**, shown in the chart below. Our annual Prop 10 revenue is now 36% lower than what it was 15 years ago – down from a high of \$12.8 million in FY 00/01 – and is projected to continue decreasing an average of 3% per year. During the course of the FY 16/17 – 19/20 strategic plan, our Prop 10 revenue will decline 9%, from \$7.7 to \$7.0 million.

First 5 Contra Costa Prop 10 Tobacco Tax Revenue (millions) – History & Projections



In addition, our **expenditures have exceeded revenue** since FY 06/07, as shown below, requiring us to rely on our fund balance and external resources to meet our funding obligations. While this strategic use of our fund balance allowed us to maintain program investments over the last several years, particularly during the Great Recession, **this approach is not sustainable in the long-term**, as the discretionary reserves in our fund balance will be exhausted by the end of FY 19/20.

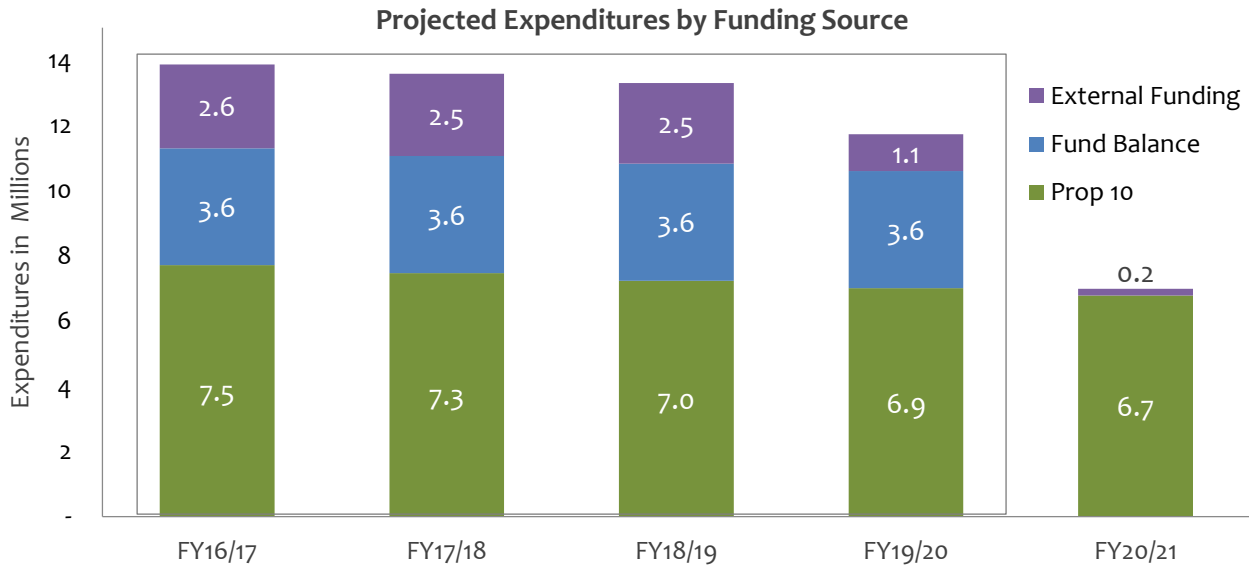
**First 5 Contra Costa Revenue and Expenditures, 2005-2021**



### Other Fiscal Projections

The chart on the following page provides a more detailed look at our projected expenditures by funding source during the FY 16/17 – 19/20 strategic plan period. Projections are based on information known at this time, and will be updated annually.

- Total revenue projections for FY 16/17 – 19/20 include **\$29.4 million in Prop 10 revenue** and **\$8.7 million in external revenues**. Projected **expenditures** for the same period total **\$52.5 million**, funded in part with the last **\$14.4 million from the fund balance**.
- First 5 will continue to **spend down the discretionary reserves in its fund balance** through FY 19/20, at which point a balance of **\$7.5 million** will be maintained as an **Emergency Reserve** in the event that First 5’s revenue suddenly decreases.



- First 5 anticipates receiving significant external funding through FY 20/21, primarily to **support systems-building strategies** in the Early Childhood Education and Early Interventions Initiatives.
- Beginning FY 20/21, First 5’s revenue will be **limited to its annual Prop 10 tobacco tax allocation** and a nominal amount of external funding. By then, First 5 will likely be a smaller agency in scope and size.

## Our Investment Approach

First 5 will work with other county leaders and partners to proactively pursue new opportunities to obtain or leverage resources that support the early childhood system in Contra Costa County. These resources may flow directly to First 5 or to another partner in the county, which would help distribute and institutionalize the funding responsibility among other entities. However, it is unlikely that these pursuits will ever completely make up for the declining funding stream specifically established for First 5. **This fiscal reality sets the stage for First 5 to prioritize our investments in sustainable ways that allow us to live within our means and achieve lasting change.**

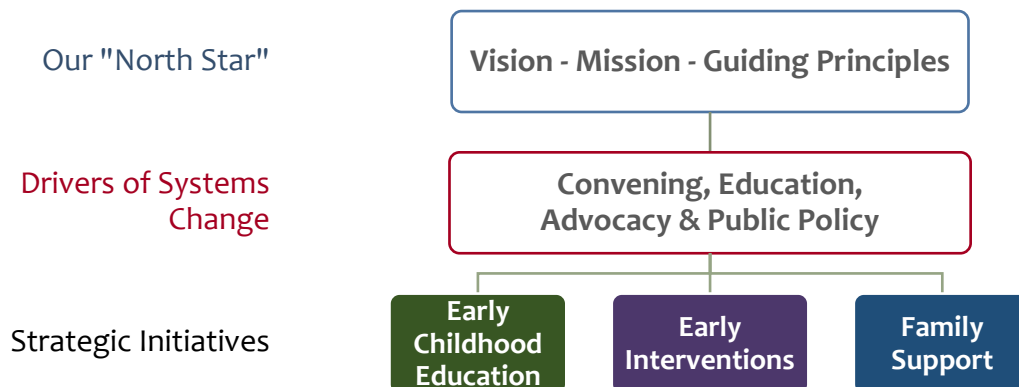
# Our Evolving Approach

When First 5 Contra Costa was established 17 years ago, the influx of new money dedicated to early childhood allowed us to use our resources to build or enhance programs and direct services that impacted individual children and families. As we make the transition to a leaner organization with fewer resources, we must maintain our sights on our vision, mission, and guiding principles – our “North Star” – while **shifting our role and funding approach to create an enduring impact for the greatest number of young children in Contra Costa.**

Going forward, we will increase our emphasis on **strengthening the systems that serve children and families** and decrease our emphasis on funding direct services. These systems-building activities are essential to advancing First 5’s mission and vision and achieving the goals of our **strategic initiatives**:

1. **Early Childhood Education:** All children have access to high-quality, affordable child care and early learning.
2. **Early Interventions:** All children will achieve their optimal development.
3. **Family Support:** All children are raised in supportive and nurturing families.

To accomplish this, First 5 Contra Costa will continue to engage in a broad set of **education, advocacy and public policy activities** that foster or drive systems change. More specifically, we will convene and collaborate with partners working toward shared goals, conduct public education and social marketing campaigns about the importance of investing in early childhood, support the development of community leaders, and advocate for policies that institutionalize long-term support and funding for direct service programs.





We will **prioritize direct service investments** that:

1. Directly address the Goal(s) and Strategic Directions in one or more of our three **strategic initiatives**.
2. Have a high likelihood of impacting **systems or policy changes** prioritized in First 5's strategic plan.
3. Are grounded in **evidence-based and best practices** and have a strong likelihood for favorable child and family **outcomes**.
4. Are closely **aligned** with other initiatives, funding opportunities, and/or partners working on the same or similar issues.
5. Benefit **families in greatest need** in order to reduce disparities.

**Over the first two years of this strategic plan, the Commission will end its financial support for currently-funded direct service programs that do not align with these priorities.** The specific time table for transferring or ending First 5's funding for such programs will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

We intend to work with our partners and other local funders to create where we can a “soft landing” for programs that First 5 is no longer able to fund, in order to minimize the impact on organizations and the families they serve. In cases where there is not another ready funding source, we will step down our funding over the first two years of this plan. Although these steps may not be easy to implement, they will ensure the sustainability of a strong service system for children and families for many years to come.

This parallel approach to streamlining First 5's direct service investments and pursuing new opportunities to leverage resources is the best and most sustainable path to realizing First 5's vision that all children in Contra Costa County are healthy, ready to learn, and supported in safe, nurturing families and communities.

# Our Strategic Initiatives

During the FY 16/17 – 19/20 strategic plan, First 5’s priorities and investments will be aligned with three Strategic Initiatives focused on Early Childhood Education, Early Interventions, and Family Support.

Each Initiative lists an aspirational **Goal**, followed by the hoped-for **Long-Term Impacts** that could be achieved by First 5 and our partner agencies and collaborations in the county. The initiative’s long-term impacts are matched with a set of **Indicators of Communitywide Progress**, which First 5 cannot achieve alone but can make a contribution towards. Two **Strategies** are listed for each Initiative, along with **Strategic Directions** that outline our priorities for the next four years. The Strategic Results will be measured by several **Efforts** (activities to implement the strategy) and **Outcomes** (results of the activities).

In addition to the specific Strategies and Strategic Directions described in each Initiative, First 5 will apply an **Overarching Strategy** of convening, education, advocacy, and policy work to all Initiatives. The Strategic Directions for these **drivers of system change** will be the common thread that runs throughout all of our initiatives, and links our everyday work to our mission and vision.

## DRIVERS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

**Overarching Strategy:** Convene partners and engage in education and advocacy for policies that promote the optimal health and education of young children and their families.

### Strategic Directions

- Advocate for **policies, funding, and systems changes** that advance First 5's vision, mission and core initiatives.
- Support **community advocacy and leadership** around issues concerning families with young children.
- Engage in **social marketing and public education** to support First 5 strategies and raise awareness of other issues concerning families with young children.
- Convene and engage in **partnerships and collaborations** to advance policies that support families of young children in Contra Costa.
- Work with partners to develop strategies to effectively reach and engage marginalized families – particularly **African-American families** and those living in poverty – in family support activities.
- Continue to identify **high-quality practices** to be incorporated into programs and services.
- Provide **training and professional development** to build providers' capacity to deliver high-quality programs.
- Support countywide efforts to boost **family economic security** and reduce poverty.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INITIATIVE

**Goal:** All children have access to high-quality, affordable child care and early learning.

### Long-Term Impact

- Children enter school prepared to succeed socially, emotionally and academically.
- Early learning workforce is sufficiently educated and trained to successfully meet standards of high quality.
- Standards, policies, and funding for ensuring access to high-quality ECE are institutionalized.

### Indicators of Communitywide Progress

- Percent of children ready for school at kindergarten entry.
- Percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade children reading at grade-level proficiency.
- Percent of 3 and 4 year olds in preschool.

**Strategy 1: Support education and professional development necessary for ECE providers to meet standards of high quality.**

### Strategic Directions

- Support education and professional development in community **colleges**, prioritizing providers serving children in highest need areas.
- Support and advocate for **local B.A. pathways** for early learning professionals.
- Provide educational and professional development **incentives** as funding allows.

### Strategic Results, measured by:

#### Effort

- ✓ Number of early learning professionals who participate in community college advising programs
- ✓ Number of advising and support services provided

#### Outcome

- ✓ Percent of early learning professionals who advance in their education and permit pathways

**Strategy 2: Continue to build the ECE quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) to foster ongoing improvement of early learning program quality.**

**Strategic Directions**

- Evaluate, assess and refine **quality improvement methods and activities**.
- Support **site-level quality improvement activities** through workforce development, on-site coaching and consultation, and family engagement practices.
- Expand where possible the **quality rating and improvement system** beyond the county’s areas of highest need.

**Strategic Results, measured by:**

Effort

- ✓ Number of early learning program sites participating and rated in QRIS
- ✓ Number of children attending QRIS programs

Outcome

- ✓ Percent of QRIS sites rated at high quality levels
- ✓ Percent of QRIS sites with improved rating elements
- ✓ Within the QRIS system, percent of children attending sites that are in high-quality tiers

## EARLY INTERVENTIONS INITIATIVE

**Goal:** All children will achieve their optimal development.

### Long-Term Impact

- Parents and caregivers have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to support their children’s optimal development.
- Children have access to prevention and early intervention supports and services that foster optimal development.
- Standards, policies, and funding to meet children’s developmental and behavioral health needs are institutionalized.

### Indicators of Communitywide Progress

- Number of children requiring special education services at kindergarten entry.
- Children enter special education at earlier ages and remain in special education for fewer years.

**Strategy 1: Develop the “Help Me Grow” system to expand and enhance the system of early screening and access to services that meet children’s developmental needs.**

### Strategic Directions

- Expand **universal developmental screening** and referral efforts in **pediatric care** and **early learning settings**.
- Develop a **centralized care coordination and referral phone line** that integrates client-tracking and data collection systems.
- Increase the availability of assessment and services for children with **mild-to-moderate concerns and delays**.
- Launch **social marketing** efforts that promote developmental screening and early intervention.

## Strategic Results, measured by

### Effort

- ✓ Number of children under age 6 receiving developmental screening
- ✓ Number of early learning and pediatric sites that participate in Help Me Grow
- ✓ Number of calls to the Help Me Grow hotline
- ✓ Number of children with mild to moderate delays participating in supportive activities
- ✓ Description of public education campaign

### Outcome

- ✓ Percent of children under age 6 who improve in one or more developmental domains
- ✓ Percent of families who access referrals given to them
- ✓ Degree to which families are more aware of their children's development
- ✓ Percent increase in public awareness of the importance of screening and early intervention

## Strategy 2: Support effective practices to improve children's early mental health.

### Strategic Directions

- Support implementation and expansion of **Triple P** in multiple settings.
- Support the system of services for children affected by **chronic stress and trauma**.
- Provide professional development for service providers on **evidence-based practices and trauma-informed services**.
- Convene **partners** to improve and increase access to the early childhood mental health service system.

### Strategic Results, measured by:

#### Effort

- ✓ Number of children and families who complete a Triple P course
- ✓ Number and type of locations where Triple P classes are offered
- ✓ Number and type of providers trained in evidence-based and/or trauma-informed practices

#### Outcome

- ✓ Percent of children improving in key behavioral domains (Triple P)
- ✓ Percent of parents improving in key parenting domains (Triple P)
- ✓ Percent of training participants who report changes in practices as a result of training

## FAMILY SUPPORT INITIATIVE

**Goal:** All children are raised in supportive and nurturing families.

### Long-Term Impact

- Parents and caregivers have the knowledge, confidence, and skills to develop positive parent-child relationships.
- Families have strong and supportive connections in their communities.
- Parents access needed services for themselves and their children.
- Families achieve financial stability and security.
- Standards, policies, and funding that strengthen the family support system are institutionalized.

### Indicators of Communitywide Progress

- Percent change in rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect.
- Percent change in rate of removal to foster care.
- Percent of families who access WIC and SNAP.

**Strategy 1: Provide and expand the availability of place-based family support services.**

### Strategic Directions

- Support **First 5 Centers** and expand programming and reach as possible through satellites, collaborations with community partners and external funding.
- Support multi-agency family support network to increase capacity and expertise regarding the **Strengthening Families** framework.
- Support efforts to **increase literacy** in young children.
- Support **Community Advisory Councils (CACs)** to ensure planning and delivery of First 5 Center services is reflective of community needs.



## Strategic Results, measured by

### Effort

- ✓ Number of First 5 Center services and classes provided
- ✓ Number of First 5 Center participants
- ✓ Number of caregivers enrolled in evidence-based parent education classes
- ✓ Number of children receiving developmental screening
- ✓ Number of adult males participating in programming
- ✓ Number of active CAC members

### Outcome

- ✓ Percent of caregivers who improve their parenting skills
- ✓ Percent of caregivers who report increases in social support
- ✓ Percent of CAC members who improve their leadership skills
- ✓ Percent of families who read to their children daily

## Strategy 2: Provide home-based family support services.

### Strategic Directions

- Support **home visiting programs for parents of children prenatal to 2 years.**
- Support **alignment with other Contra Costa home visiting programs**, including Early Head Start, Nurse Family Partnership, and Healthy Families America.
- Seek additional revenue and funding partners to **support and expand the availability** of home visiting programs in Contra Costa.

## Strategic Results, measured by

### Effort

- ✓ Number of families who receive home visiting
- ✓ Number of families who participate in home visits during pregnancy
- ✓ Number of adult males who participate
- ✓ Number of children receiving developmental screening
- ✓ Median duration of home visiting services

### Outcome

- ✓ Percent of families linked to needed services
- ✓ Percent of mothers who breastfeed three months after delivery
- ✓ Percent of caregivers who improve parenting skills
- ✓ Percent of caregivers who report increases in social support
- ✓ Percent of participants with improvement in depressive symptoms

## Our End Goal

Our FY 16/17 – 19/20 strategic plan marks a time of transition for First 5 Contra Costa. During this time, we expect our Prop. 10 revenue to continue to decline and plan to spend down the remainder of our fund balance. Despite this fiscal reality, opportunity remains. This plan puts us on a solid path for creating the enduring systems, partnerships and policies that will benefit all children in Contra Costa County now and well into the future.

## APPENDIX A – Our Planning Process

The reality of declining Prop 10 revenue required First 5 to embark on this strategic planning process with an eye toward sustainability and systems-building. This strategic plan reflects a comprehensive planning process that began with gathering stakeholder input about First 5’s strengths and challenges, opportunities and threats, and past and future roles and contributions. Stakeholder input was gathered through:

- An online survey for First 5 Commission members;
- Two stakeholder meetings focused on early mental health and family support; and
- Key informant interviews

First 5’s staff and strategic planning consultants also conducted in-depth reviews of community demographics and indicators of child wellbeing; policy and funding trends at the local, state and national levels; and the efforts and outcomes of First 5’s current initiatives.

These efforts culminated in First 5 Contra Costa’s Briefing Book (available at <http://bit.ly/1L2wnH4>), which provided a series of “snapshots” about the needs of young children and families in Contra Costa County and the changing landscape in which First 5 exists. The Briefing Book provided a context for further analysis and discussion at the Commission’s strategic planning retreat, at the end of which Commission members stated their commitment to:

- Maintain First 5’s Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles;
- Invest in three Strategic Initiatives that build systems and supports related to Early Childhood Education, Early Interventions, and Family Support;
- Invest in education, advocacy, and policy work to advance First 5’s mission, vision and core initiatives; and
- Focus investments and efforts on areas of the community with the greatest need.

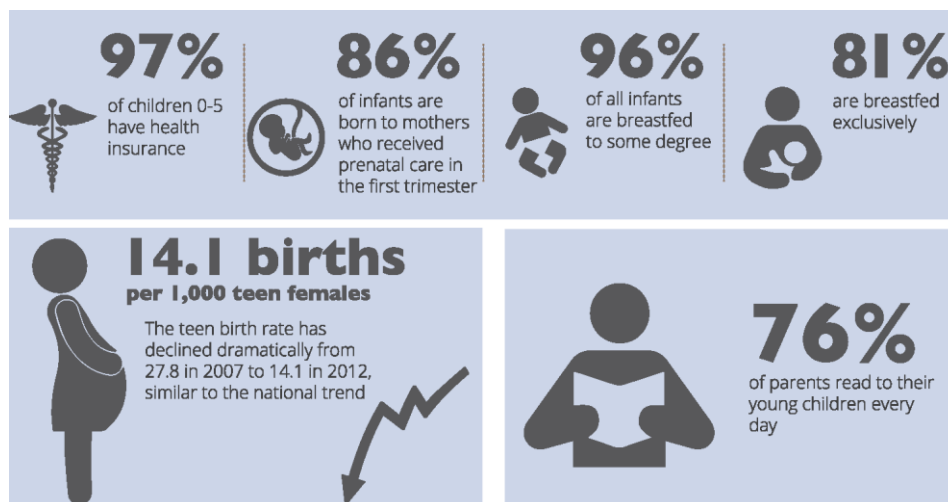
The strategic plan was developed to reflect the Commission’s stated priorities, and presented for review and discussion at the September 2015 Commission meeting.

## APPENDIX B – The Changing Landscape

The current economic, political and strategic landscape in which First 5 works presents both challenges and opportunities. In addition to First 5’s fiscal projections, the following key trends and data have shaped First 5’s strategic intent and direction, as described in this plan.

### A Snapshot of Contra Costa County’s Children

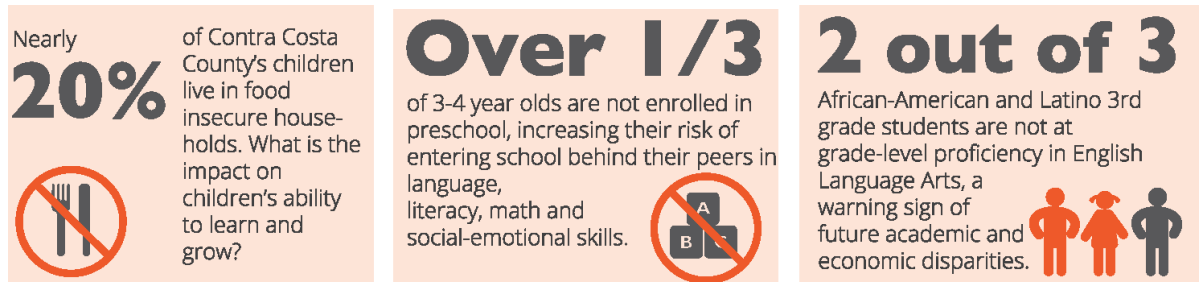
As one of the Bay Area’s fastest-growing counties, Contra Costa is now home to 1.1 million people – a 15.4% increase since 2000. In recent years, Contra Costa has become a “majority minority” county, in which no single race or ethnicity constitutes a majority of the total population. Children under the age of 6 comprise 8% of the county’s population, and in many respects, they are faring well in crucial areas of development. For example:



However, a closer look at community data reveals that many of Contra Costa’s children continue to experience adversity in health, safety, education, and family economics. For example:

- **Fifteen percent of all children under the age of 6** live in families whose incomes are at or below the Federal Poverty Level (\$24,250 for a family of 4 in 2015).
- **One-third of African-American children (33%) and nearly a quarter of Latino children (24%)** live in poverty.
- And of equal concern are **the high percentages of children in Contra Costa who do not have reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food (20%) and are not enrolled in preschool (42% of 3-4 year olds)**. These socioeconomic stressors in early childhood are just two examples of likely contributors to later disparities, illustrated by the staggering

fact that 2 out of 3 African-American and Latino 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students are not at grade-level proficiency in English Language Arts, which in turn increases the risk for future academic and economic disparities.



- 15 percent of Solano and Contra Costa County adults report **experiencing four or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) such as abuse, neglect, or other household dysfunction.** Research shows that more adverse experiences during childhood elevate the lifetime risk – and associated costs – of poor physical and emotional health.

While progress has been made to foster the optimal development of young children in Contra Costa, there is still much work to be done to ensure that all children get a strong start in life.

## Aligning Evidence, Policy and Investments

**Early childhood has achieved unprecedented prominence in recent years.** Decades of research has proven that the first five years of life are crucial in setting the future trajectories of health, emotional well-being, educational achievement, and economic stability as adults.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, by boosting the chances of better outcomes and reducing adverse ones, investments in early childhood pay for themselves many times over. Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman estimated rates of return on these investments to be between 7 and 10 percent — higher than market returns on equity.<sup>2</sup>

**A growing awareness of the evidence, combined with persistent advocacy, is paying off at the local, state and national levels in the form of increased investments, policies and high-**

<sup>1</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 2014. *Early Childhood Experiences Shape Health and Well-being Throughout Life.* Issue Brief. RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America, August 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Heckman J, Moon S, Pinto R et al. The rate of return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1-2): 114-128, 2010.

**quality programs and practices that benefit young children and their families.** Recent developments include:

- Local implementation of **nationally recognized strategies** such as Strengthening Families, Help Me Grow, and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS);
- Increased attention to the impact of **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and best practices for trauma-informed care;**
- Funding from the California Department of Education to increase the number of low-income children in **high-quality state preschool programs** (QRIS block grant);
- First 5 California’s 5-year Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive (IMPACT) initiative, focused on supporting a **continuum of quality improvement systems;**
- Inclusion of **early childhood education** in *A Blueprint for Great Schools 2.0*, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction’s **roadmap for education;** and
- Proposed state legislation and policies that would **mandate universal developmental screening.**

In addition, County First 5s have the experience, data and credibility to influence policies in ways that were unimaginable just 10 years ago. Policymakers and funders look to First 5s for guidance on the most effective investments in the health, education and wellbeing of young children. Local education and advocacy efforts are bolstered by a deeper partnership with First 5 California, the First 5 Association’s policy agenda and communications strategy, and efforts of other early childhood advocacy organizations – many of which are in the Bay Area.

**This growth and alignment in the evidence, policy and investments in early childhood holds more than just symbolic significance.** These are the drivers of systems changes that are necessary to mitigate socioeconomic disparities and close the opportunity gap that still exists for many of Contra Costa’s youngest children.