



**FIRST 5**  
CONTRA COSTA

# STRATEGIC PLAN

AND LONG-RANGE  
FISCAL PLAN

Fiscal Years  
2020/21–  
2022/23



# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
About First 5 Contra Costa .....	4
Why Early Childhood Matters.....	5
First 5 Contra Costa Today .....	6
The Early Childhood Landscape .....	7
Our Long-Term Fiscal Plan.....	8
A Strategic Imperative: Systems Change for Young Children and Their Families.....	12
Our Strategic Roadmap .....	14
Looking to the Future.....	16

# Acknowledgements

## Commissioners

	<b>Commissioners</b>	<b>Alternates</b>
District I	Dr. Rocio Hernández	Genoveva Garcia Calloway
District II	Marilyn Cachola Lucey, Secretary/Treasurer	
District III	PJ Shelton	Lee Ross
District IV	Gareth Ashley, Chair	Matt Regan
District V	John Jones, Vice Chair	
County Board of Supervisors	Supervisor Diane Burgis	Supervisor Candace Andersen
Health Services Department	Dr. Chris Farnitano	
Employment & Human Services	Kathy Gallagher	Katharine Mason
Children & Family Services	Kathy Marsh	Roslyn Gentry

## Strategic Planning Team

Sean Casey, Executive Director  
Ruth Fernández, Deputy Director  
Shawn Garcia, Administrative Manager  
Marnie Huddleston, Finance and Operations Director  
Lisa R. Johnson, Grants and Contracts Manager

## Strategic Planning Consultant

Nicole M. Young, MSW



# About First 5 Contra Costa

## Vision

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

## Mission

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

## Core Values

Our everyday work is grounded in our commitment to:

- **Diversity & Inclusion** – We work to ensure the diverse values, voices, and perspectives of our staff, partners, and community members are heard, represented, and reflected throughout our work.
- **Equity** – We work to eliminate systemic and structural barriers that cause or contribute to inequities so that all children and families in our community succeed.
- **Cultural Humility** – We continuously reflect on the ways in which our beliefs, cultural identities, power, and privilege influence our actions and interactions. We maintain curiosity and an openness to learning from others’ lived experiences and adapting our approaches.
- **Community Partnership** – We listen to and learn from families, organizations, and policymakers. We build relationships based on shared values, shared power, trust, respect, and a collective commitment to ensuring the health and well-being of all children.

## 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. The intent of Proposition 10 is to “**facilitate the creation and implementation of an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system of information and services to enhance optimal early childhood development and to ensure that children are ready to enter school.**”*

*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.***

## First 5 Contra Costa Commission

---

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

## Why Early Childhood Matters

With the passage of Proposition 10 in 1998, California made a clear commitment to prioritize the health and well-being of young children, prenatal through age five, and their families. Up to that time, new developments in neuroscience and neuroimaging technology were providing visible evidence of the effects of both positive and negative early childhood experiences on brain development, confirming the critical importance of the first five years of life. However, the programs, practices, and policies that directly affected the lives of young children and their families had not yet caught up to reflect this new knowledge.

Over the last 20 years, First 5s across the state have worked with other advocates to increase awareness of the importance of supporting young children and their families during one of the most rapid and critical periods of children's brain development. Through a combination of research, professional experience, and families' lived experiences, it is now commonly understood that a child's relationships and experiences in the earliest years of life shape the developing brain. Safe, nurturing relationships and experiences build healthy brains, creating a strong foundation for positive outcomes in health, learning, and behavior across the life course.

We also now have a greater understanding of how trauma, or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as chronic toxic stress, physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, a caregiver experiencing mental illness, substance use or incarceration, exposure to family violence, or the accumulated effects of poverty – can disrupt children's developing brains, weakening the foundation on which all other health, development, and learning occurs. In addition, there is a growing recognition that the root causes of ACEs are often linked to policies and practices that create systemic barriers to opportunities and resources across entire communities, such as housing policies and lending practices that produced patterns of racial and economic segregation that still exist today.

The good news is that multiple research studies have confirmed that investing in high-quality, developmentally-appropriate early childhood programs and systems – such as early care and education, developmental and behavioral health services, and parenting and family support – produces tangible benefits. Nobel Laureate James Heckman and his colleagues found that investing in high-quality early childhood development programs, particularly for children in families experiencing socio-economic challenges, can deliver a 13% annual return on investment by improving life outcomes related to health, education, employment, and

social behaviors.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Heckman states, “The highest rate of return... comes from investing as early as possible.”<sup>2</sup>

## First 5 Contra Costa Today

This understanding of the critical importance of early childhood has driven First 5 Contra Costa to work alongside its partners to build a strong foundation for our county’s youngest children. With investments nearing \$200 million over the past two decades, we have focused on supporting and building effective, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive programs and systems to ensure all young children start kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. We have achieved and contributed to many successes along the way, including but not limited to these notable highlights:

- Maintaining five high-functioning **First 5 Centers**, where parents meet other parents with young children, learn more about child development, and increase their parenting confidence and competence;
- Increasing access to **evidence-based parenting support** through the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program; and
- Providing tools and training to build strong and effective **parent leaders and advocates for optimal child development through the Regional Groups and the First 5 Centers**.
- Building and expanding **Quality Matters**, a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) designed to rate, improve and communicate about child care quality;
- Establishing Contra Costa’s **Help Me Grow** system, as part of a national effort to build local systems for early identification of children’s developmental challenges and navigating parents to appropriate services;
- Implementing countywide adoption of **developmental screening**, according to recognized guidelines and using a standardized tool;
- Mobilizing community members to advocate for over \$2 million for **local park improvements** for families with young children.

In addition, First 5 Contra Costa has worked alongside other commissions and advocacy organizations across the state to raise the level of public enthusiasm and support for policies and services that help young children and their families. Through all these efforts, First 5 has gained a high degree of credibility and legitimacy for its leadership in the county and the Bay

---

<sup>1</sup> García, Jorge Luis, James J. Heckman, Duncan Ermini Leaf, and María José Prados. “The Life-cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program.” (2016)

<sup>2</sup> Heckman, J. 2014. Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy. [www.heckmanequation.org](http://www.heckmanequation.org)

Area region. First 5 is now sought out for its expertise and leadership in engaging community partners and building coalitions, attracting new funding to local efforts for families, focusing on high-quality programs that make a difference for children and families, identifying and addressing root causes that affect family stability and child health, (particularly racism and economic inequity), and advocating for local and state-level changes that support children.

Similarly, First 5 Contra Costa's continued relationships with local and regional funders, as both collaborator and grantee, has increased the number of Bay Area foundations interested in our work. Local foundations have renewed and increased their interest in early childhood as a result of ongoing First 5 education and community-led advocacy. Continuing these relationships, and developing new ones, will be key to ensuring that programs, initiatives, and innovations influencing early care and education receive the focus and support they warrant in Contra Costa County.

This track record of accomplishments bodes well for First 5's continued partnerships and collaborations in early learning, mental health, and family support. Furthermore, First 5's broadening advocacy work through community leadership development in Regional Groups, the Coffee and Kids policy breakfast, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, and Richmond Parks Assessment Report is critical to advancing our visibility in the county.

## The Early Childhood Landscape

As First 5 enters its third decade, the statewide landscape has shifted remarkably. For the first time in First 5's history, California's Governor and Legislature are enthusiastic supporters of early childhood. After a sustained effort by First 5s and many other advocates for children and families, Governor Newsom's administration has launched the state of California in a new direction, one that seeks to support and stabilize families in multiple ways. The Governor's first budget included commitments to work toward universal preschool, expanded childcare and paid family leave, full-day kindergarten, developmental and trauma screening, and expansion of the state earned income tax credit, including a first-ever California child tax credit.

In addition, leadership at the state level includes elected officials who have prior experience in early childhood and who understand how providing high-quality support and interventions from the earliest ages can change the trajectories of children's lives. Several legislators have served on local First 5 Commissions or are intimately knowledgeable about the work of First 5s. Many have also expressed interest in supporting new funding for First 5,

however, among the new and expanded funding for early childhood programs in the Governor’s first budget, none was specifically directed to California’s First 5s.

Ironically, the remarkable changes occurring at the state – as well as national – levels comes at a time when First 5s around the state have seen their revenue drop considerably as tobacco consumption has steadily declined due to decreased tobacco consumption. At a time when First 5 might be considered the “ground troops” to implement the Governor’s agenda and new legislation, First 5s are forced to make difficult decisions about how best to use their remaining resources, which will continue to decline in the coming years.

## Our Long-Term Fiscal Plan

While First 5 Contra Costa remains at the forefront of systems change for young children and their families, we also cannot escape the fact that our fiscal resources continue to diminish. Our prudent fiscal stewardship, combined with our fortunate ability to attract external funding, has extended the life of the reserve funds set aside by the Commission in our earliest years. Even so, the remaining unassigned funds in the Commission’s fund balance will not suffice to support all of our current activities, as current external funding ends or declines. This elevates the urgency and importance of First 5’s efforts to build strong, sustainable systems of support for young children and their families, in order to maximize the impact of our investments.

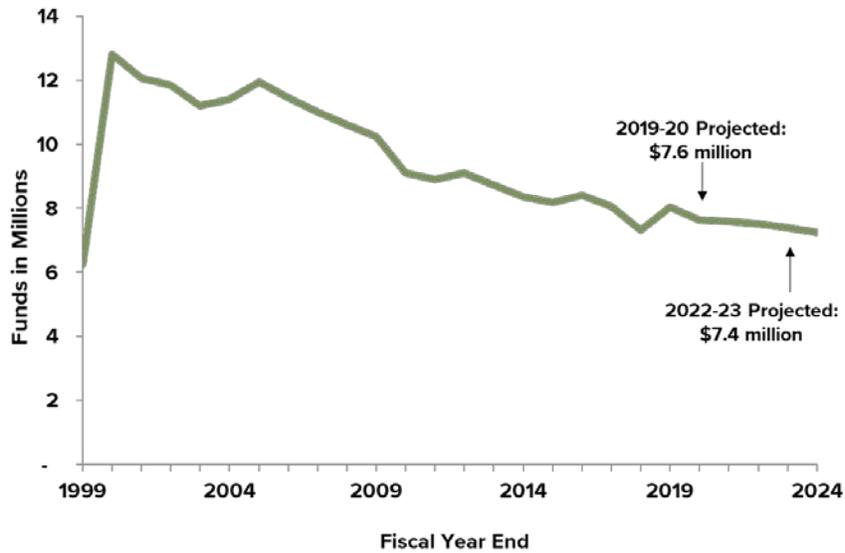
This section provides a **framework to guide the Commission’s investments** during the FY 20/21 – 22/23 strategic plan. This strategic plan does not name specific programs that will receive funding, nor does it obligate the Commission to actual contracts or funding awards. Rather, it describes First 5’s fiscal landscape and projects the resources the Commission will have available over the next three years to sustain its systems-building efforts, exert influence, and achieve lasting change.

### Revenue Projections

Our principal source of revenue, the **Proposition 10 tobacco tax**, continues to decline due to the steady drop in tobacco consumption over the last two decades. As shown in the chart below, our annual Prop 10 revenue is now 16% lower than what it was a decade ago and down 40% from a high of \$12.8 million in FY 00/01. Prop 10 revenue for the state overall is projected to decline 10% from FY 2019 to FY 2024. Interestingly, Contra Costa’s revenue is projected to slightly *increase* by 1.1% during the same period, due to the trend of increasing births in the County. In fact, the Bay Area is seeing a demographic shift in families, with

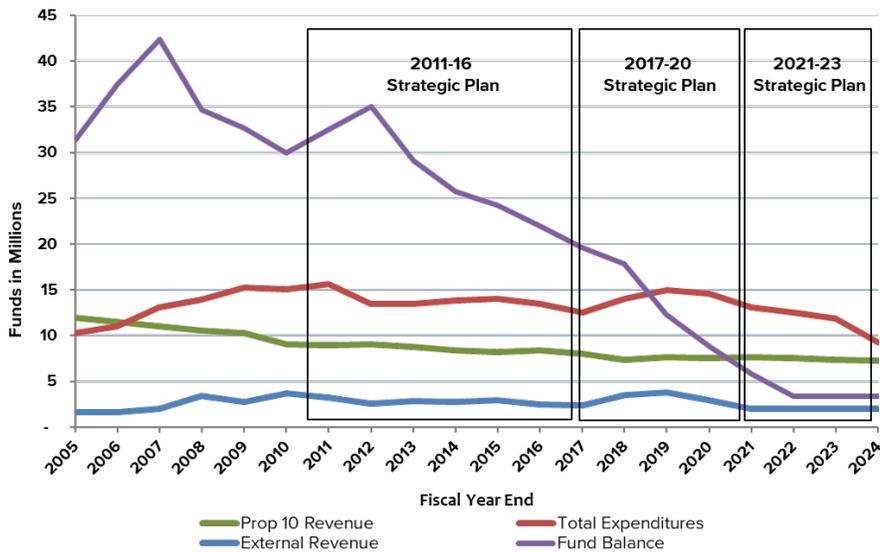
markedly declining birth rates in Alameda, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties and increasing birth rates in Contra Costa, Napa and San Joaquin.

**Proposition 10 Revenue, 1999 – 2024**



In addition, since FY 06/07, we have used the **fund balance** we accumulated in our earliest years to sustain the strategies and initiatives we have developed over the past two decades in order to develop and demonstrate the activities and interventions we thought would have the greatest impact for families. While this strategic use of our fund balance allowed us to maintain program investments over the last several years, particularly during the Great Recession, we have known for several years that **this approach is not sustainable in the long-term.**

**First 5 Revenue and Expenditures, 2005 – 2024**



With the remaining fund balance, approximately \$12.5 million as of June 2019, we will expend no more than \$9 million over the next three years, with incremental declines each year, so that no fund balance will be available in FY 2023-24 and beyond. This would leave a small, unassigned fund balance of \$3-4 million as an ongoing cushion in the fund.

First 5 has also benefitted greatly from **external funding** from multiple sources over the past 20 years. These have included large contracts with First 5 California and the California Department of Education, as well as large and small grants from numerous local and regional foundations. Historically, external funding has exceeded \$2 million each year. Even as some of our larger grants have come to an end, it is likely that we will be able to sustain at least \$2 million in external funds in coming years.

## Fiscal Strategies

Total revenue projections for FY 20/21 – 22/23 include **\$22.5 million in Prop 10 revenue** and **\$6 million in external funding**. Up to **\$9 million will be available from the First 5 unassigned fund balance** over the next three years, allowing for a more gradual step-down of First 5’s historical investments. To support the fund balance, the Commission will release the remaining funds committed in 2004 for capital spending related to First 5 Centers (\$841,227), and eliminate the \$7.5 million “contingency fund” established in 2011 due to the threat of legislative measures that could reduce First 5 revenues or reserves.

Beginning FY 23/24, First 5’s available revenue will be limited to its annual Prop 10 tobacco tax allocation and the external funding that is available at that time. **The Commission’s fund balance will no longer be available to support its expenses.**

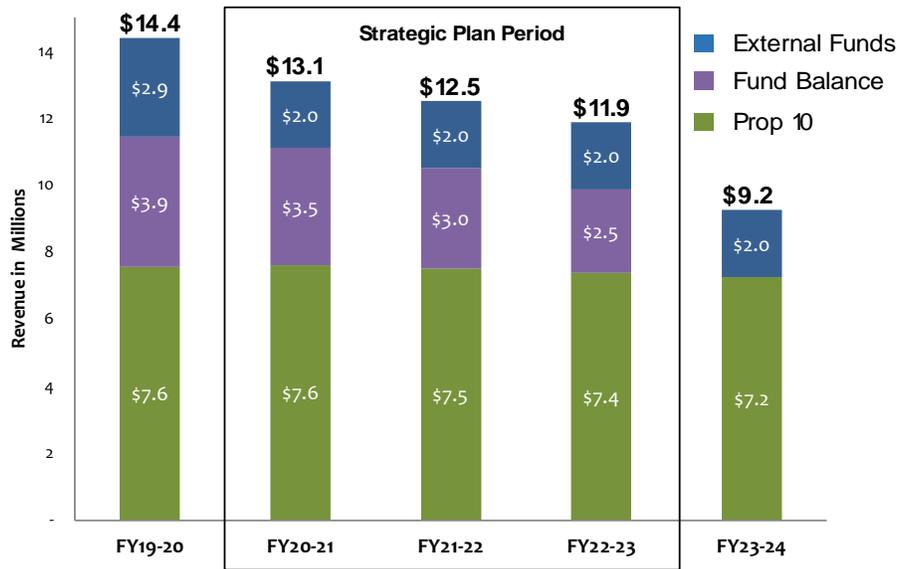
First 5 will continue to work with other county leaders and partners to proactively pursue new opportunities to **obtain or leverage resources** that support the early childhood systems in Contra Costa County. Our work in this area could include:

- Joining our state association in advocating for expanded funds for children and families in annual state budgets, including additional state funds to support First 5’s activities;
- Partnering with Contra Costa County agencies in leveraging state and local funds for prevention and early intervention activities in health and social services, such as MediCal, Mental Health Services Act, child welfare and other revenue streams;
- Seeking out additional private sector partners in business and philanthropy who see the worth of First 5 and the benefit to communities across the county; and

- Advocating for new dedicated local revenues either by fees, taxes or by other sources, such as cannabis, that could sustain First 5 in the long term.

The following chart summarizes our projected revenues by funding source during the FY 20/21 – 22/23 strategic plan period. Projections are based on information known at this time, and will be updated annually.

**Projected Revenue by Funding Source, 2019 – 2024**



All of these efforts will be necessary to sustain First 5 by 2024 and beyond. Given the rapidly changing landscape in Contra Costa and California, as noted earlier, we can be optimistic that First 5 will remain viable through the next decade as policymakers continue to value and appreciate the unique asset that First 5s have become across California. Whatever resources become available to First 5 Contra Costa in the coming years, First 5 will continue to evolve, **live within its means and invest its resources in sustainable, lasting change.**

# A Strategic Imperative: Systems Change for Young Children and Their Families

First 5 Contra Costa is entering an era in which public and political will to invest in early childhood is reaching new heights, while the primary source of First 5's revenue is expected to remain flat or decline. After spending the last two decades raising awareness and advocating for policies and funding that give young children the best possible start in life, we cannot afford to step back now. Instead, this creates a strategic imperative for First 5 to sustain our achievements and use our credibility, visibility, and expertise to create positive, enduring systems change that will promote the well-being of young children and families in Contra Costa now, and for generations to come.

## Our Lens for Systems Change

Promoting systems change for young children lies at the core of First 5's existence, as articulated in Proposition 10. Young children can spend significant time in education, health, recreation, community, and other settings in their earliest years. Their parents and caregivers – all of whom need support and guidance at some point – seek help and consultation in these and other settings as well. Ideally, effective systems should...

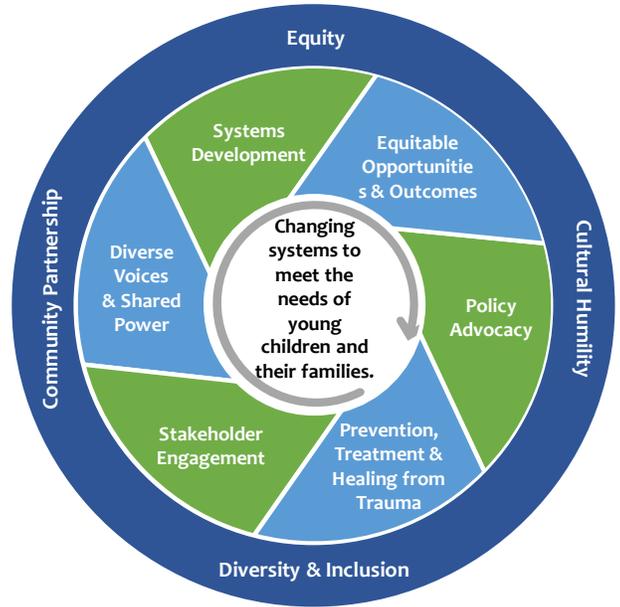
- Respond to young children and families' needs;
- Operate at high levels of quality and effectiveness in order to make change for children and families;
- Support children and families' unique differences and needs and ensure access for all; and
- Develop policies, practices, and partnerships that foster equity and family well-being.

In reality, too many of the systems that serve young children and families are siloed, overly bureaucratic, and built on a legacy of policies and practices that produce health and economic inequities based on race, ethnicity, immigration status, and other demographics. Over the last two decades, much of First 5's work has involved building and improving systems to eradicate inequities, using tools and approaches that seem effective, adjusting as necessary, and replicating what works. The lessons we've learned have evolved into a single, comprehensive framework that helps us pursue a blend of funding, partnership, and policy solutions that have lasting impacts on the lives of young children and families, beyond First 5 Contra Costa's direct investments.

We call this framework a “lens” for our systems change practice, as it is a way to view our work and bring key elements of it into focus. In practice, the lens could be applied to any of

our strategies, to our agency practices, or to our organization as a whole. The Lens focuses us on our **core purpose**, *changing systems to meet the needs of young children and their families*, and integrates three **essential strategies** with three **guiding principles**, surrounded by our **core values** of Equity, Cultural Humility, Diversity & Inclusion, and Community Partnerships.

In identifying these elements of our framework, we recognize that, depending on where we are pointing our lens, the relative weight of each component will vary, but we expect that a combination of the following components should be present in all that we do.



## Essential Strategies

**Systems Development:** Our systems development work includes professional and workforce development, identifying and supporting adoption of evidence-based practices, promoting standards and practices for delivering high-quality services, and reversing inequities by addressing root causes.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** We bring a broad range of stakeholders into our work, while supporting their work as well; form partnerships and coalitions; share resources; enhance knowledge and capacity; and build leadership beyond the walls of First 5. Our stakeholders include, but are not limited to: Families and caregivers, providers, partner agencies, residents, cities, schools, community-based organizations, county agencies, coalitions, and more.

**Policy Advocacy:** We build the case for investing in early childhood and communicate it to influential policy makers and their supporters. Our policy advocacy work includes, but is not limited to: Community partnerships, capacity building, research and evaluation, communications, government relations, policy development, and sustainability planning.

## Guiding Principles

These principles inform how First 5 Contra Costa operates and approaches its strategic investments and partnerships.

- We prioritize our efforts and investments to focus on **eliminating disparities** and creating **equitable opportunities and outcomes**.
- We contribute to strengthening and building **trauma-informed** early childhood systems that **prevent, treat, and heal trauma** and adverse childhood experiences.
- We seek out and listen and partner with **diverse and under-represented voices**, with **shared power**, clear communication, and agreements as to roles and responsibilities, expectations, decision-making, and accountability.

## Our Strategic Roadmap

We are now in a time when First 5s across the state can be highly influential in the implementation of California’s growing education and health systems for young children. First 5 Contra Costa will continue to be a strong advocate for advancing systems change and policy reform, building on the two decades of local experience that we have accumulated. As our tobacco tax revenues decrease, we will need to be proactive in our partnerships with other funders and agencies supporting families with young children.

Given this, our strategic roadmap for FY 20/21 – 22/23 focuses on two main priorities: **1) Integration of Early Childhood Systems** and **2) First 5’s Impact and Sustainability**. The strategic roadmap outlined below provides a broad framework for applying the systems change lens to all of First 5’s efforts and investments. It will be a living, dynamic tool that will guide our efforts to infuse our core values of diversity, inclusion, equity, cultural humility, and community partnership into our work with early childhood systems.

This strategic roadmap does not name specific programs and initiatives that First 5 will fund or support, in order to provide the greatest degree of flexibility and ability to adapt to changing conditions and circumstances over the next three years. However, the goals and strategies in each priority are designed to sharpen First 5’s focus on integrating, sustaining, and expanding (whenever possible) our existing systems work and the broader systems serving young children in the county. This roadmap will help First 5 navigate the ever-changing funding and policy landscape in partnership with county agencies, community-based organizations, elected officials, families, caregivers resident Regional Groups, and

other community members who share our vision of ensuring that Contra Costa’s youngest children are safe, healthy, and ready to learn.

## Strategic Priorities

### 1. Integration of Early Childhood Systems

**Goal:** Strengthen the **integration of early childhood systems** that foster equitable opportunities and outcomes for all young children and their families.

#### Strategies

##### Systems Development

- Increase integration of **First 5-supported systems of care** that are components of an equitable early childhood system.
- Provide technical expertise to influence **systems development and integration in other sectors** of the early childhood system (e.g. health, early learning, K-12 education, child welfare, public health, social services, etc.).
- Support **continuous quality improvement** of programs, practices, and policies within and across sectors.
- Support **professional and workforce development**.
- Promote adoption of **common standards, practices, and shared measurements** within and across sectors.
- Address and promote **racial, social, and economic justice**.
- Continue to improve **collection and use of data** to demonstrate impact.

##### Policy Advocacy

- Advocate for **local, state, and federal funding and legislation** that will leverage, expand, and sustain countywide investments in the early childhood system.
- Advocate for **equitable policies and practices** that build a prevention-focused, trauma-informed early childhood system.
- Advocate for **racial, immigrant, and economic justice** to ensure equitable access to services, resources and care for all young children and families.

### Stakeholder Engagement

- Develop and maintain **effective partnerships and collaboration with leaders** that serve young children and families.
- Continue efforts in **parent engagement, leadership, and advocacy** that both inform and contribute to development of the early childhood system.
- Support **community advocacy efforts** led by families with young children.

## 2. First 5's Impact and Sustainability

**Goal: Build on, sustain, and/or grow** First 5's investments in the early childhood system.

### **Strategies:**

- Refine **First 5-developed models and systems** through the systems lens and address equity, integration, impact, and sustainability.
- Research and pursue **diversified revenue streams**, including options for generating revenue through First 5's products and services.
- Continue to demonstrate the impact of First 5 through enhanced internal capacity to conduct **research, data collection, and analysis** of child outcomes for policy advocacy.
- Continue to build the case for sustainable investments in early childhood through **communications materials and campaigns**.
- Advocate for **local, state, and federal funding and legislation** that will leverage, sustain, and/or expand First 5's strategic investments.

## Looking to the Future

By the end of our FY 20/21 – 22/23 strategic plan, First 5 Contra Costa will have been in existence for 25 years. During that time, our resources and relationships will have helped thousands of Contra Costa's youngest children be healthy and ready for school and life. While improving outcomes for children is at the core of our mission, we believe our true legacy will be the strengthened partnerships, improved systems, and sustainable funding streams that will support the health and wellbeing of Contra Costa's children and families for generations to come. We look forward to continuing to work toward this aspirational vision in partnership with families, systems leaders, our staff, and Commissioners.