



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

BUILDING BLOCKS MINI-GRANTS 2025-2026

Release Date: September 2, 2025

Due Date: September 30, 2025, by 12:00 PM PT

Total Funding Available: \$20,000

For questions about this RFA, please contact:

Lisa R. Johnson
Grants and Contracts Manager
First 5 Contra Costa
grantsandcontracts@first5coco.org

Important Notice

First 5 Contra Costa reserves the right to cancel or withdraw this RFA at any time without prior notice. First 5 Contra Costa may, at its sole discretion, reject any or all applications submitted in response to this document.

All applications and supporting materials submitted in response to this RFA become the property of First 5 Contra Costa and are subject to the California Public Records Act.

GENERAL INFORMATION

First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission invites **Contra Costa–based nonprofits and community groups with a fiscal sponsor** to apply for **Building Blocks Mini-Grants**.

A total of **\$20,000 is available**, with individual awards of up to **\$4,000 each**.

These one-time mini-grants support **community advocacy projects** that build awareness, strengthen community voice, and advance policies and systems that benefit children ages 0–5 and their families. All projects must be completed no later than June 30, 2026.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Building Blocks Mini-Grants create opportunities for organizations working to advance systems change for Contra Costa families with children ages 0–5. These mini-grants are for one-time policy advocacy projects that align with First 5 Contra Costa’s mission: ensuring that young children are healthy, ready to learn, and supported in safe, nurturing families and communities.

WHO CAN APPLY

Applicants must be one of the following:

- Nonprofit organizations physically located in Contra Costa County and serving Contra Costa families with children ages 0–5, OR
- Community groups based in Contra Costa County that have a qualified nonprofit fiscal sponsor

Important Notes:

- If using a fiscal sponsor, administrative/processing costs charged by the sponsor cannot exceed 10% of the total grant award.
- Contracts will be made directly with the nonprofit organization or fiscal sponsor serving as the legal entity. Community groups will not contract directly with First 5 Contra Costa.

TIMELINE

DATE	ACTION
September 2, 2025	Application Released
September 9, 2025 (1:00 PM, PT)	Informational Webinar (Online)
September 15, 2025	Deadline to Submit Questions
September 22, 2025	Response to Questions Posted Online
September 30, 2025 (12:00 PM, PT)	Applications Due
October 15, 2025	Notification to Applicants
November 1, 2025	Projects Begin
By June 30, 2026 (Final reports due within 30 days of project completion)	Projects End

ABOUT FIRST 5 CONTRA COSTA

For over 25 years, First 5 Contra Costa has supported children from prenatal to age 5, focusing on prevention and equity to help every child reach their full potential. Our vision is that young children in Contra Costa are healthy, ready to learn, and supported in safe, nurturing families and communities. We prioritize our efforts to eliminate disparities and create equitable opportunities and outcomes.

Our three focus areas are:

- Early Care & Education – Ensuring children have access to high-quality early learning experiences that prepare them for success in school and life.
- Early Intervention – Promoting early intervention, mental health supports, and screenings that connect families to services that can change children’s developmental trajectory.
- Strengthening Families – Helping families access the information and services needed for their children to thrive, increasing parent/caregiver knowledge, and fostering resilience.

We center our work on strong early childhood systems grounded in a whole child/whole family approach, prioritizing racial equity. We actively promote diversity, inclusion, and equitable opportunities so all children, especially those in communities of color, can thrive.

The Building Blocks Mini-Grants provide policy advocacy mini-grants of up to \$4,000 for organizations that are actively advocating for—or would like to start advocating for—changes that:

- Support the health, development, and well-being of children from prenatal to age 5 and their families in Contra Costa County
- Align with First 5 Contra Costa’s three focus areas

DIRECT SERVICES vs. POLICY ADVOCACY

This Building Blocks Mini-Grants opportunity is to support policy advocacy activities, events, and projects and does not support direct service work. Below are examples of direct service approaches versus policy advocacy approaches. Please note these examples are illustrative only and should not be interpreted as the required or expected responses.

ISSUE AREA	DIRECT SERVICE APPROACH	POLICY ADVOCACY APPROACH
Equitable access to education for children with developmental delays	A provider adapts classroom activities and gives sensory tools to support a child with autism.	Share information with the Board of Supervisors about the benefits of early intervention and special education services.
Promoting positive parent-child relationships and healthy development	A home visiting program provides parenting guidance, tracks child health, and offers referrals.	Parents share stories with lawmakers to advocate for increased investment in home visiting programs.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

These mini-grants aim to build community power and strengthen the voice of parents, caregivers, and service providers. We especially welcome proposals from groups rooted in and led by communities of color, immigrant families, and others historically excluded from policy-making spaces.

✓ Projects We Will Fund

- Education & Awareness – forums, educational materials, policy briefs, speaker series, social media campaigns
- Coalition Building – working groups, listening sessions, shared policy agendas, networking events
- Research & Data Collection – needs assessments, surveys, data analysis reports
- Capacity Building & Training – advocacy workshops, toolkits, storytelling, leadership courses, conferences

✗ Projects We Will Not Fund

- Lobbying for/against legislation or candidates
- Campaign materials
- Fundraising
- Ongoing staff salaries or operational expenses
- Capital projects or property improvements
- Discriminatory practices

All projects must be non-discriminatory, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and provide reasonable access and accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Any food and beverage purchases made with mini-grant funds must comply with the First 5 Contra Costa Healthy Food and Beverage Policy (view on website).

INFORMATIONAL WEBINAR

Potential applicants are highly encouraged to attend the Applicant Information Workshop on Tuesday, September 9, 2025, at 1:00 PM PT. [Click here to register.](#) The webinar will review eligibility, requirements, and the online application process, and will include an overview of the RFA. It will be recorded and posted on our website for replay.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

All questions must be submitted in writing to grantsandcontracts@first5coco.org **by September 15, 2025, at 5:00 PM PT.** Responses will be compiled and posted publicly on the First 5 Contra Costa Building Blocks mini-grants webpage **on or before September 22, 2025.** First 5 Contra Costa reserves the right to determine the timing and content of responses.

HOW TO APPLY

First 5 Contra Costa will accept applications until the **September 30, 2025 deadline.** All applications must be submitted through the online application portal by 12:00 PM (PT). This portal link will be posted on the First 5 Contra Costa Building Blocks mini-grants page under [Funding Opportunities](#). Applicants should review the application timeline before submission.

For Submission, applicants must include:

- Attachment A – Application Form
- Attachment B – Project Budget & Budget Narrative
- Attachment C – Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement (if applicable)

HOW PROJECTS ARE EVALUATED

All applications will first be screened for eligibility. Eligible applications will then be reviewed and scored by a panel that may include Commissioners, First 5 Contra Costa staff, and community stakeholders. Applications can earn up to 100 points based on the following criteria:

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	POINTS
Organizational Capacity	Applicant is qualified to implement the project and achieve stated objectives.	20
Proposed Work Plan	Project is clear with a realistic timeline; activities are well-defined, feasible, and eligible.	25
Benefiting Children 0–5 and Their Families	Applicant describes the need of the target population and alignment with First 5 Contra Costa’s work.	20
Outcomes / Impact	Objectives are specific, realistic, measurable, and consistent with First 5 Contra Costa’s vision and focus areas.	25
Proposed Budget	Budget is clear, detailed, reasonable, and aligned with project goals.	10

FINAL REPORT & DOCUMENTATION

READ THESE FOR REFERENCE (Do Not Submit) [Click here to view](#)

- Exhibit A – Application Checklist & How to Complete the Online Application
- Exhibit B – First 5 Contra Costa Insurance Requirements
- Exhibit C – First 5 Contra Costa Sample Contract (short form)
- Exhibit D – First 5 Healthy Food & Beverage Policy
- Exhibit E – Acknowledgment of First 5 Funds

SUBMIT THESE WITH YOUR APPLICATION (Due by Sept 30, 2025 at 12:00 PM PT)

- [Attachment A – Application Form](#)
- [Attachment B – Project Budget & Budget Narrative](#)
- [Attachment C – Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement \(if applicable\)](#)

IF YOU ARE APPROVED (Provide Before Contracting)

- **IRS W-9 Form** (completed and signed)
- **Proof of Nonprofit Status:** First 5 will verify nonprofit status through Guidestar.
 - Nonprofits must be in **good standing** with the IRS, California Secretary of State (bizfileonline.sos.ca.gov), and the Franchise Tax Board.
 - All applicants must also provide a **local address** or evidence of service to Contra Costa County families.
- **Certificate of Insurance** – General Liability naming First 5 Contra Costa as Additional Insured
- **F5 Healthy Food & Beverage Policy** – Agree to comply for any food/beverage purchases
- **Funding Acknowledgment** – Acknowledge First 5 Contra Costa on outreach/materials (logo and guidelines provided).

AFTER YOUR PROJECT ENDS

Final reports are due within **30 days of project completion**, but no later than **June 30, 2026**. If your project ends on or close to June 30, your report is still due by **June 30, 2026** (not later).

You'll need to submit:

- **Attachment D – 2025–26 Mini-Grants Final Report**
- **Receipts** for all expenses
- **Check for unspent funds** (*if applicable*)
- **Supporting materials** such as photos, quotes, or testimonials

WHERE TO SEND YOUR FINAL REPORT

Email: mnevarez@first5coco.org

Attn: Monica Nevarez

QUESTIONS

About applying / eligibility / timeline: grantsandcontracts@first5coco.org

ATTACHMENT A: APPLICATION FORM

Applicant Organization (Nonprofit or Community Group): _____

Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable): _____

Project Title: _____

Please respond to each question in 300 words or less. Suggested ranges are provided to help guide your responses, but answers will not be penalized if they are shorter—as long as they clearly address the question.

Summary of the Project (please summarize your proposed project or activity) (150-250 words).

Describe your organization and key staff (100-200 words).

Describe the project, activities, and timeline (200-300 words).

How will this project support children 0-5 and their families? (100-200 words).

How will success be measured? (200-300 words).

By signing below, the applicant certifies that funds will not supplant existing revenue, activities will be tobacco-free and independent of tobacco industry support, and all information provided is accurate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ATTACHMENT B: PROJECT BUDGET & BUDGET NARRATIVE

Applicant Organization (Nonprofit or Community Group): _____

Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable): _____

Project Title: _____

PROJECT BUDGET

Note: If using a fiscal sponsor, administrative/processing costs charged by the sponsor cannot exceed 10% of the total grant award.

Budget Categories	Funds Requested	In-Kind/Other Funds	Total Activity Cost
TOTAL			

BUDGET NARRATIVE (please explain or clarify any of the items listed above)

ATTACHMENT C: FISCAL SPONSOR AGREEMENT

Applicant Organization (Nonprofit or Community Group): _____

Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable): _____

Project Title: _____

Agreement Period: From _____ (start date) to _____ (end date).

PURPOSE OF AGREEMENT

The Sponsored Entity has proposed the above Project. The Fiscal Sponsor agrees to sponsor the Project and take responsibility for meeting the requirements of First 5 Contra Costa and any other funders.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FISCAL SPONSOR

- Serve as the legal and fiscal representative for the Project
- Manage funds and ensure they are used according to the approved budget, project plan, and First 5 requirements
- May retain up to 10% of the total grant award for administrative/processing costs

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPONSORED ENTITY

- Carry out the Project as described in the mini-grant application
- Provide the Fiscal Sponsor with all required information, receipts, and reports

SIGNATURES

This agreement confirms that the Fiscal Sponsor and Sponsored Entity accept the responsibilities described above for the purpose of this mini-grant project.

Fiscal Sponsor Authorized Signature

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name & Title: _____

Sponsored Entity (Community Group/Project) Authorized Signature

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name & Title: _____

ATTACHMENT D: PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Applicant Organization (Nonprofit or Community Group): _____

Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable): _____

Project Title: _____

Funding Amount \$: _____

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Nonprofits applying directly: complete Applicant Organization only. Community groups: complete both Applicant Organization and Fiscal Sponsor.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Describe your funded activity/project. (What did you do?)

What issue or challenge did your activity address, and who were the decisionmakers or community members you wanted to reach or influence?

How well did the activity work? What was accomplished?(Share any results, outcomes, or highlights.)

How did Contra Costa children 0–5 and their families benefit from the activity or event?

What was most successful about your activity or event?

If you could do it again, what would you do differently?

Do you have any other comments or feedback for First 5 Contra Costa?

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS (check all that apply)

- Photos (with release forms, if a public event)
- Quotes or testimonials
- Receipts for approved expenses
- Check for any unspent funds

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Final Report Deadline: Due within 30 days of project completion, and no later than **Tuesday, June 30, 2026** (whichever comes first).

Submit to: Monica Nevarez, Grants Program Assistant — mnevarez@first5coco.org

Email subject line: **2025–26 Building Blocks Mini-Grants Final Report – [Project Title] – [Legal Entity (Nonprofit or Fiscal Sponsor)] – [Applicant Organization]**

If there is no fiscal sponsor, use: **2025–26 Building Blocks Mini-Grants Final Report – [Project Title] – [Organization Name]**