

# Building Blocks

## Mini-Grants 2025-2026

REQUEST FOR APPLICATION (RFA)

### INFORMATION SESSION

**Tuesday, September 9, 2025**

**1:00pm - 3:00pm**

**This webinar will be recorded and shared via  
the Building Blocks Mini-Grants Landing Page on  
our website**



The images of exhibits and attachments in this presentation are illustrative examples and may not reflect the specific exhibits or attachments in the current RFA. Please refer to the official RFA documents for complete and accurate information.

# Who's Not Eligible

The following **cannot apply** for this funding

- Individuals
- Individual child care providers
- For-profit businesses or corporations
- Political candidates, parties, or organizations
- Organizations or groups engaging in lobbying activities prohibited by First 5 Contra Costa's funding policies
- Organizations that discriminate or fail to comply with state and federal requirements

**Note:** Child care consortia or collaboratives doing policy/advocacy work may apply through a fiscal sponsor.

# What We'll Cover Today

During today's session, we'll walk through:

- Welcome & Timeline
- Who Can Apply (and Who Cannot)
- What Projects We Fund
- How to Apply Online (Step by Step)
- What You'll Need to Upload
- How We Review Applications
- Reporting After Your Project Ends
- Deadlines & Updates
- Q&A

**Let's Get Started**



# Who's Here Today



**Lisa R. Johnson**

Grants & Contracts Manager

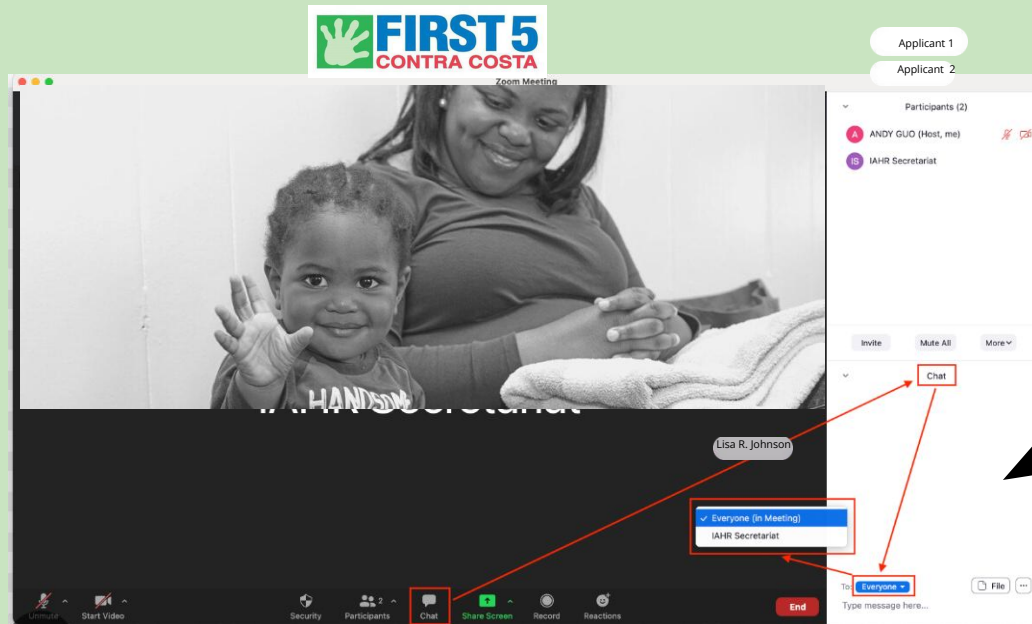


**Sarah Burke**

Data & Policy Analyst

*We're excited to guide you through the process and help make applying as simple as possible.*

# Ask Us Questions Anytime



Use the Q&A box to send us your questions during today's session.

**NOTE:** We'll also collect all written questions and post answers on our website by September 22, 2025, so everyone has the same information.



# About First 5 & the Mini-Grants



# About First 5 Contra Costa

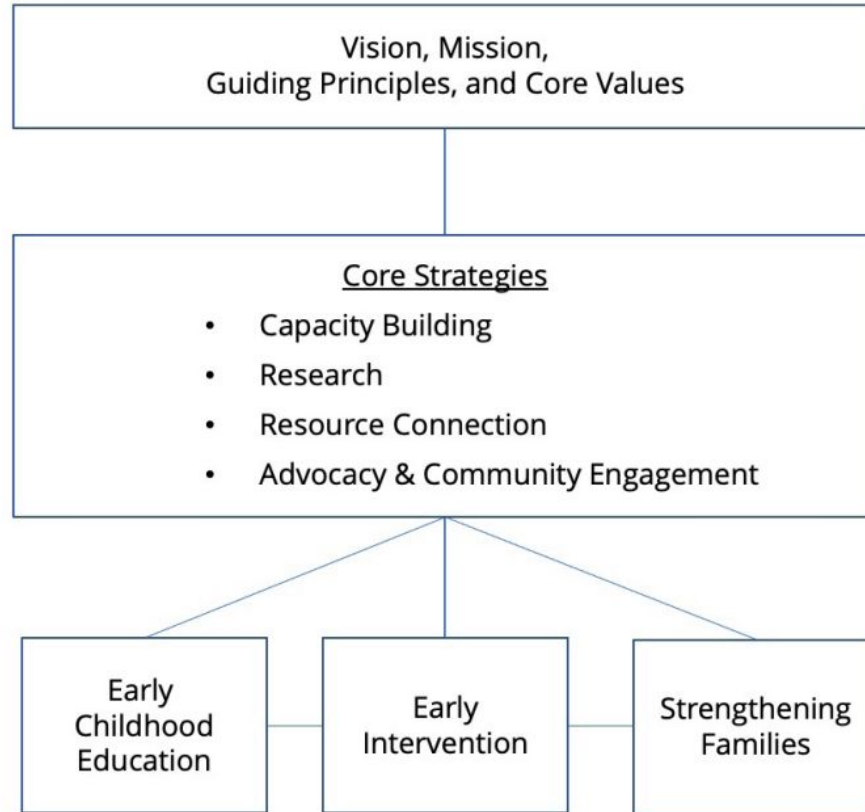
**First 5 Contra Costa is a public agency focused on maximizing the first five years of children's lives and helping the adults in their lives - their parents, caregivers, educators, and pediatricians - understand the opportunity in these critical early years.**

**We focus on prevention, center our work around equity, and play many roles to reach our vision: funder, convener, and advocate.**





# Strategic Roadmap



# What is a mini-grant?

- Mini-grants are small funding awards designed to support community-based projects.
- First 5 Contra Costa is offering \$4,000 mini-grants to five organizations to help them carry out policy advocacy activities or events that strengthen families, promote early childhood well-being, and support our communities.
- Mini-grants are meant to be accessible, with a simple application process, so that smaller organizations and community groups can bring their ideas to life.

# What is the funding for?

The **Building Blocks Mini-Grants** creates funding opportunities for organizations that are working to **advance systems change** for Contra Costa children prenatal to 5 and their families.

# What is the funding for?

First First 5 Contra Costa created the **Building Blocks Mini-Grants** to 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 prenatal to age 5 and their families in Contra Costa County
- Align with First 5 Contra Costa's work in its three focus areas
  - Early Care & Education
  - Early Intervention
  - Strengthening Families

# What is systems change?

*“Systems change is the process of addressing the root causes of social issues. Unlike direct service work that provides immediate relief to individuals, systems change aims to create long-lasting change by shifting the structures, policies, processes, and power dynamics that perpetuate these problems. It takes into account the intricate political, social, and economic factors contributing to these issues and actively seeks to change them.”*

~ Social Justice Partners

# How You Can Use the Funds







# How can funds be used?

Funding requests that are eligible include, **but are not limited to:**

- **Education & Awareness** - these activities help inform the public and decision-makers about issues affecting young children.
- **Coalition Building & Stakeholder Engagement** - these activities strengthen networks and build collective power.
- **Research & Data Collection** - these activities help build evidence and inform policy discussions.
- **Capacity Building & Training** - these activities help nonprofits and community members become stronger advocates.

# Education & Awareness

These activities help inform the public and decision-makers about issues affecting young children:

- Host a community forum or town hall on early childhood issues (e.g., child care access, maternal health, early intervention)
- Create and distribute educational materials (flyers, infographics, videos) about the importance of early childhood programs
- Develop a policy brief or white paper on a specific issue (e.g., preschool access, developmental screenings) and share it with stakeholders
- Organize a speaker series or panel discussion featuring experts in early childhood development, health, or education
- Launch a social media campaign to raise awareness about local challenges and solutions for children 0–5

# Coalition Building & Stakeholder Engagement

These activities strengthen networks and build collective power:

- Facilitate a cross-sector working group (e.g., child care providers, pediatricians, educators) to identify shared policy priorities
- Conduct listening sessions or focus groups with parents and caregivers to gather input on policy needs
- Develop a shared policy agenda with other nonprofits or community groups focused on early childhood
- Host a networking event to connect organizations working on 0–5 issues and foster collaboration

# Research & Data Collection

These activities help build evidence and inform policy discussions:

- Conduct a community needs assessment focused on early childhood services and gaps
- Survey families or providers to understand barriers to accessing early childhood programs
- Analyze local data (e.g., child care deserts, health outcomes) and produce a report for policymakers

# Capacity Building & Training

These activities help nonprofits and community members become stronger advocates:

- Offer advocacy training workshops for parents, caregivers, or providers on how to engage in policy change
- Develop toolkits or guides on how to participate in public comment periods or advisory boards
- Train staff or volunteers on storytelling for advocacy (e.g., how to share lived experiences to influence systems)
- Attend a leadership development course for parents of young children to participate in civic processes
- Attend a conference that focuses on policy knowledge and/or skill building

# How can funds not be used?

Examples of funding requests that are NOT eligible include, **but are not limited to:**

- Asking lawmakers or elected officials to support or oppose specific legislation, regulations, allocation of public resources, or ballot measures
- Promoting a political candidate or party
- Producing campaign-style materials (e.g., bumper stickers, ads)
- Fundraising
- Ongoing expenses, including ongoing salaried staffing costs or operational expenses
- Capital project or improvements (defined as any improvements to one's property such as construction, additions, alterations, and/or modifications that may increase the value of that property.)
- Discriminatory practices of any kind



# Let's Walk Through the Application



# How the Application Works

- Applications must be submitted **online only**
- **Deadline: Sept 30, 2025, by 12:00 PM PT**
- No paper or email submissions
- All required attachments must be uploaded
- Applications reviewed in October → **Notifications by Oct 15**

# How to Apply Online

- Create an account in the First 5 Application Portal  
Select “**Building Blocks Mini-Grants 2025–2026**”
- Complete all sections: org info, project details, budget
- Upload attachments (A, B, C if applicable)
- Review and save a printer-friendly copy for your records
- Submit before the deadline — **no edits after submission**



**Tip:** Don't wait until the last minute to avoid technical issues.



## Building Blocks Mini-Grants

[View Guidelines](#)

Accepting applications until Sep 30, 2025 12:00 PM

### 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.

You have 1 application that has not been submitted. Click edit, view all my applications, or start a new application.

Lisa Johnson on behalf of Contra Costa Children and Families  
Commission  
Application ID: 1946935

Edit

[View all my applications](#)

[Start new application](#)



[View Guidelines](#)

Building Blocks Mini-Grants FY 2025-2026-Eligibility

Applicant Information



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT NETWORK  
1234 Innovation Blvd, Suite 567, Metropolis, Ca, 90210, Us Metropolis, CA, 90210, US  
12-3456789



Lisa Johnson  
lrjohnson@first5coco.org

ELIGIBILITY FORM QUESTIONS

Complete the required fields below.  
Accepting applications until Sep 30, 2025 12:00 PM

1. Are you a nonprofit organization (501(c)(3)) located in Contra Costa County, or a community group with a qualified nonprofit fiscal sponsor?\*
2. Does your organization or group serve families with children ages 0-5 in Contra Costa County?\*
3. Is your proposed project or activity focused on policy advocacy (not direct services)?\*
4. Can your project be completed by June 30, 2026, with a final report submitted no later than June 30, 2026?\*

Eligibility Passed

Congratulations! You have passed eligibility and can now proceed with your application.

[Cancel](#)

[Continue to application](#)

[Submit](#)

[View Guidelines](#)**Application Forms**

- Building Blocks Mini-Grants FY 2025-2026-Eligibility
- Submitted on Sep 9, 2025
- Building Blocks Mini-Grants FY 2025-2026 - Application
- Draft on Sep 9, 2025

## Building Blocks Mini-Grants FY 2025-2026 - Application

Building Blocks Fund Mini-Grants FY 2025-2026

**Applicant Information** [Manage applicants \(1\)](#) 

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT NETWORK  
1234 Innovation Blvd, Suite 567, Metropolis, CA, 90210, US  
12-3456789

[Update organization](#)

Lisa Johnson  
lrjohnson@first5coco.org

**FORM QUESTIONS** [Download](#)

Complete the required fields below.

Accepting applications until Sep 30, 2025 12:00 PM

[Organization and Contacts](#)[Attachments](#)

### — ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

Organization Legal Business Name\*

Tax id\*

Primary address\*

Start typing to search for an address

[Can't find your address?](#)

Project title\*

Requested Funding Amount\*



# Building Blocks Mini-Grants FY 2025-2026 - Application

Building Blocks Fund Mini-Grants FY 2025-2026

ⓘ Organization and Contacts

Attachments

## — Attachments

Attachment A – Application Form\*



Click or drop files here to upload  
Maximum file size: 29MB

Attachment B – Project Budget & Budget Narrative\*



Click or drop files here to upload  
Maximum file size: 29MB

Attachment C – Fiscal Sponsor Agreement  
(if applicable)



Click or drop files here to upload  
Maximum file size: 29MB

[Previous](#)

Submit

# Tips & Reminders

- Don't wait until the last minute — technical issues always pop up when we least expect them.
- Double-check that your attachments uploaded correctly.
- Make sure your budget adds up and matches your narrative.

# How Applications Are Scored

Applications can earn up to **100 points**:

- **Organizational Capacity (20 pts):** Qualified to implement project
- **Work Plan (25 pts):** Clear, realistic, feasible activities
- **Benefit to Children 0–5 (20 pts):** Addresses real needs of families
- **Outcomes / Impact (25 pts):** Specific, measurable, aligned with First 5 goals
- **Budget (10 pts):** Clear, reasonable, aligned with project goals

# After Your Project Ends

## Final report due:

- Within 30 days of project completion
- No later than **June 30, 2026**

## Must include:

- Attachment D (Final Report form)
- Receipts for expenses
- Photos, quotes, or testimonials (if applicable)
- Check for unspent funds

# We're Here to Help

- Submit questions by **Sept 15, 2025 (5:00 PM PT)**
- Responses posted by **Sept 22, 2025**
- Contact: **[grantsandcontracts@first5coco.org](mailto:grantsandcontracts@first5coco.org)**
- Informational Webinar: **Sept 9, 2025, 1:00 PM PT**
  - English + Spanish recordings will be posted on our website

# Stay Informed

- **Check the First 5 Funding Opportunity page often.**

This is where you'll always find the most up-to-date information about this mini-grant.

- **Review before you submit.**

Make sure your application is complete and matches the most current RFA requirements.

- **Deadline matters.**

Applications must be submitted online by **Sept 30, 2025 at 12:00PM PT**. Late applications cannot be accepted.



# Q&A

Lisa R. Johnson

[grantsandcontracts@first5coco.org](mailto:grantsandcontracts@first5coco.org)

