



**Staff Report
July 6, 2009**

ACTION: X
DISCUSSION:

TITLE: Review and Accept Draft Goals, Objectives and Strategic Directions for Strategic Plan

Background:

Over the last five months, Commissioners and First 5 staff have been working on developing and refining a set of goals, objectives and strategic directions for the Commission's new strategic plan. These statements of intent will form the basis for program development and funding allocations over a five-year period, from July 2011 to June 2016.

Since February, the planning process has included the following activities:

- **The February Commission Retreat:** At its retreat, the Commission reaffirmed its vision and mission statements and preliminarily developed and ranked goals designed to ensure children are healthy, learning, in loving and supportive families, in financially stable families, and living in safe and supportive communities. In the interval following, staff refined the language of the goals and made preliminary suggestions for objectives.
- **The Program and Evaluation Committee met April 2** and further refined the goals, reviewed and revised objectives, and refined the ranking of the goals, identifying 7 "core" goals, 8 "supporting" goals and 2 "peripheral" goals. Staff and Commissioners agreed to resume working with the Commission on the strategic plan once the results of the May election were known.
- **The Program and Evaluation Committee met June 24** and confirmed the final set of goals, refined and confirmed the objectives, reviewed and revised a set of strategic directions for accomplishing the objectives and recommended the full set for Commission review.

Principal Strategic Directions

The strategic directions that follow are based on a larger recommendation for reorganizing the Commission's current strategies in a more targeted and effective manner. Staff recommends that the Commission support the following four initiatives that will form the basis of funding and program development during the period of the plan:

Family Support

This initiative would be framed around the core goals that address attachment, bonding and the needs of children at risk for chronic stress that could impair healthy brain development. This initiative would carry on much of what the Commission currently supports in the home visiting and First 5 Center strategies, but would be targeted primarily at children 0-3, the time when attachment and bonding of young children with principal caregivers is so critical. Within this initiative, the Commission would also connect with agencies and systems that serve families already at risk and support agency capacity for addressing the needs of young children.

Early Care and Education

This initiative would carry on much of what the Commission has established around professional development and childcare quality in the existing Early Childhood Education strategy. In addition, this initiative would seek to carry on the work of establishing universal preschool in Contra Costa, principally by carrying on the lessons from the Commission's state-funded school readiness initiative, which is due to expire in two years.

Comprehensive Early Intervention

This initiative would combine the activities and lessons from several current Commission activities and develop some new ones as well. Principally, this initiative will address developing and enhancing systems to identify, refer, and treat children with developmental delays, special needs, mental health conditions or other conditions for which early intervention can reduce or prevent more costly and less effective intervention later. Program activities could include systems development, developmental screening in a wide variety of settings, use of evidence-based practices for treatment, parent support, and consultation for child care providers and other agencies serving children. This initiative would also address the needs of children experiencing chronic stress through activities in a variety of settings.

Community Information and Engagement

This initiative would use such strategies as media, advocacy, and coalition participation to educate parents, families, providers and the public at large about the many facets of the early years, from health promotion to making the case for the return on investment in early childhood. This initiative would also address the Commission's goals of supporting families within their communities and cultivating community leaders to take action on behalf of families.

In addition, several strategic directions were identified that apply across all First initiatives and programs, addressing nutrition and physical activity, early literacy, parent education, family economic stability and family involvement and engagement.

Next Steps:

- Commission may confirm the goals, objectives, and strategic directions at this meeting, if desired.
- Staff will craft the full strategic plan -- including vision, mission, background data, description of the plan goals, strategic directions and funding allocations -- and bring back to PEC at its August 13 meeting and to the Commission for final approval in the Fall.
- Staff will develop implementation plans for each initiative which will be brought back to PEC for review and the Commission for approval as they are ready through the year. As initiatives are approved staff will report to contractors and the community on next steps for carrying out new programs in the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Recommendation:

Staff recommend that the Commission:

Accept and approve the goals, objectives and strategic directions for the 2010-2011 strategic plan.

Children thrive when they are healthy.

Goals

What children need

Objectives

Changes we want to see

Strategic Directions

How we're going to do it

1. Children in need receive early intervention services.

1A. Developmental screening is practiced universally.

1B. A responsive system exists to serve children with identified needs.

1C. Parents concerned about their child's development receive education and support.

As part of the Comprehensive Early Intervention initiative...

- Initiate a systems development process to identify First 5's role in supporting screening assessment referral treatment.
- Develop capacity for developmental screening within Family Support and Early Childhood Education (ECE) initiatives.
- Employ to provide early identification in early care and education settings.
- Continue assistance for parents to receive appropriate assessment referral and support.

2. All pregnant women, including teens, receive early pre-natal care.

2A. Women at-risk for late or no entry are enrolled into prenatal care.

- Focus these efforts on pregnant women who are at risk for substance use, maternal depression, domestic violence, or other family crises, as part of Comprehensive Early Intervention initiative.

8. All children receive routine health and dental care.

8A. Families have access to information about children's health.

8B. Families have access to health and oral health services for their children.

- Promote the use of mobile vans and other health providers at our First 5 Centers.
- Advocate for universal health insurance and dental insurance.
- Promote common health messages about immunizations, breastfeeding, dental, nutrition, environmental hazards, obesity prevention, etc.

9. Children receive good nutrition and develop habits for physical activity and healthy eating.

9A. Organizations that serve families with young children promote good nutrition and physical activity.

- Integrate practices and policies around nutrition and physical activities throughout First 5 funded programs.
- Participate in local and regional efforts that support healthy eating and physical activity for children.

Children thrive when they are learning.

Goals

What children need

Objectives

Changes we want to see

Strategic Directions

How we're going to do it

3. High-quality child care and early education are available, accessible, and affordable for all.

3A. Early care and education settings are high-quality.

3B. Countywide plan for universal preschool (Preschool Makes a Difference) is implemented.

- Participate in state-level policy efforts.
- Continue to raise preschool quality by funding ongoing professional development and site quality improvement.
- Outreach to local business, civic, political, educational and other leaders regarding investment in early childhood.
- Combine effective elements of First 5's School Readiness efforts into the ECE initiative targeting highest needs areas first.
- Increase the capacity of preschool teachers to work with children at-risk or with special needs.

4. Parents are actively engaged in their children's learning and development from birth.

4A. Parenting education and support promote parent engagement in children's learning.

4B. Parents understand the importance of early literacy activities and play on children's success.

- Incorporate strong parent involvement and early literacy in all First 5 initiatives and programs.
- Increase the focus on teaching parents how to develop their child's language and literacy using existing models, such as Raising a Reader, throughout our programs where possible.
- Provide public education about the role of parents as their child's first teacher.

10. Children make a successful transition into kindergarten.

10A. Schools, preschools, families and community are linked through activities that support successful transitions to kindergarten.

- Place more focus on activities for preschools and families to engage in the transition process.
- Incorporate the awareness of transition activities into other programs that serve 3-5 year olds.

Children thrive when they are in loving and supportive families.

Goals

What children need

Objectives

Changes we want to see

Strategic Directions

How we're going to do it

5. Children have relationships with caregivers that promote bonding and attachment.

5A. Services support healthy bonding and attachment between at-risk children and parents/caregivers.

5B. Policies and practices of agencies serving families promote opportunities for attachment and bonding between children and caregivers.

- Combine First 5 Centers and Home Visiting strategies into a single Family Support initiative focused on 0-3.
- Focus on families living in targeted geographic areas who would most benefit from support and education.
- Assess existing First 5 Center sites for enhancement or addition of satellite, mobile, or other sites.
- Help families transition to high-quality preschool or child care.

6. Children experiencing chronic stress receive support.

6A. Children in crisis are identified early.

6B. Services reduce the effects of trauma on child's development and relationships with caregivers.

- Combine existing mental health therapeutic, substance use and teen parent education programs and strategies into the Comprehensive Early Intervention initiative.
- Use evidence-based practices in settings serving high risk families.
- Continue funding for mental health services for children lacking insurance.
- Expand the ability of agencies serving families in crisis to deal with the impact of trauma and early childhood development.

7. All parents have the knowledge, confidence, and skills to nurture and support their children.

7A. Information and resources are available to all parents.

7B. Parenting education and support promote children's social and emotional development.

- Continue to disseminate information for parents.
- Continue to incorporate parent education in all First 5 initiatives and programs.
- Provide public information about the importance of a child's early years.

Children thrive when in financially stable families.

Goals

What children need

Objectives

Changes we want to see

Strategic Directions

How we're going to do it

11. Families earn, keep, and grow financial assets.

11A. Family support providers offer a range of asset-building services.

11B. Agencies serving families provide low-income families with resources and referrals to address their financial needs.

- Integrate economic stability efforts into existing family support programs.
- Continue to engage in education and advocacy efforts to support economic stability.

12. Families receive supports to lift them out of poverty.

12A. Public and policymakers understand that sustained and deep poverty adversely affects children.

- Promote broader knowledge between financial security and positive outcomes for children.
- Join existing advocacy efforts for policies that decrease poverty (e.g., living wage, predatory lending practices).

Children thrive when they live in safe and supportive communities.

Goals What children need	Objectives Changes we want to see	Strategic Directions How we're going to do it
13. Families have strong and supportive connections in their community.	13A. Families engage with one another in neighborhood activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue focusing/linking the mission of the Regional Groups with other public education/community mobilization efforts and other First 5 activities.• Continue to focus Family Friendly Community Grants on this objective.
14. Families are engaged in improving their community.	14A. Families have the leadership skills to improve the lives of young children in their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support Regional Groups to advocate and organize to create healthier, safer and more family friendly communities.• Continue to focus Family-Friendly Community Grants on this objective.• Incorporate opportunities for families to engage and develop as leaders in all First 5 initiatives and programs.
15. Communities have assets and resources that support families.	15A. Policies and practices exist to promote safe and empowered communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Form alliances with business and county leaders and other service providers to support early childhood and strong communities.



DRAFT OVERARCHING STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

1. Fund high-quality programs that:
 - Are most likely to have a good return on the investment
 - Use best, promising, or evidence-based practices
 - Are effectively carried out to achieve desired outcomes
2. Focus the majority of funding on programs serving families in greatest need.
3. Ensure that services for families are culturally supportive and responsive.
4. Provide cross-training and networking opportunities for providers to decrease “silo effect” and promote collaboration.
5. Align and link First 5 programs with other programs as much as possible – complement, enhance, fill gaps, and share resources when appropriate.
6. Seek funding partners or companion funding streams where possible to promote sustainability.
7. Honor, respect, and incorporate community voice and involvement wherever possible.