



Community Opportunities Fund

Cycle Three Funding Recommendations Report

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I. Executive Summary

First 5 LA staff are recommending to the Board of Commissioners approval of funding for six agencies through the third cycle of the Community Opportunities Fund (COF) for a total award amount of \$2,690,133. \$1.7 million from the total award amount will be invested in agencies new to First 5 LA.

In September, 2009, First 5 LA received 21 applications for the third cycle. Following an initial screening for eligibility, staff selected 15 applicants for review. Proposals were reviewed both internally and externally resulting in the selection of 6 recommended applicants.

For Cycle Three of COF, First 5 LA coordinated its grantmaking efforts with both the FY 2009-2015 Strategic Plan and the First 5 LA Policy Agenda, by funding policy and advocacy projects utilizing a Countywide approach and requested proposals from public agencies and private nonprofit organizations demonstrating impact in Los Angeles County. In each of the previous two COF cycles, First 5 LA invested in both organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy projects; however, Cycle Three only funded policy and advocacy activities, and Cycle Four will support organizational capacity building efforts.

Upon final funding decisions by the Board of Commissioners, next steps for staff will include: 1) Cycle Three grantee contract negotiations, 2) implementation of their individual grantee support and technical assistance plans, 3) and continued coordination with ongoing Strategic Planning efforts. Staff will also be conducting a further assessment of the third funding cycle process in coordination with planning for the rollout of the fourth and final cycle. This assessment will include reviewing lessons learned from current outreach activities as well as application and selection processes.

Cycle Three: Policy and Advocacy Recommended Applicants

1. Advancement Project
2. Alliance for a Better Community
3. Asian and Pacific Islander Obesity Prevention Alliance
4. Children’s Hospital Los Angeles
5. Great Beginnings for Black Babies Inc.
6. Historic Filipinotown Health Network

Detailed information on the six recommended applicants can be found in Appendix A

II. Community Opportunities Fund Background

First 5 LA's Community Opportunities Fund (COF), as approved in the November 2006 Open Grantmaking Implementation Plan, established a new funding mechanism for the Commission. COF was designed to be responsive to the needs of organizations and communities in LA County by funding policy and advocacy and organizational capacity building activities that support First 5 LA priorities identified in the FY 2005-2009 Strategic Plan.

COF was developed out of the Open Grantmaking investment area to address changing social trends and allow flexibility to respond to community-specific needs. A total of \$13 million was allocated to COF to be divided between four funding cycles.

Types of Grants

COF is intended to initiate sustainable and systematic change at the organizational and community levels, as opposed to direct services. Therefore, two specific types of support are funded: 1) organizational capacity building grants and 2) policy and advocacy grants.

Organizational Capacity Building

Organizational capacity building is defined within the COF Funding Guide as organizational development activities that build and sustain growth and effectiveness.

Policy and Advocacy

For the purposes of COF, policy is defined as rules, standards, guidelines or laws enacted by government, organizations or communities to influence the behavior of systems, communities or individuals and/or to direct resources to achieve one of the COF Policy Goals that are identified in Appendix B. For the purposes of COF, advocacy is defined as the effort to raise public or policymaker awareness in order to achieve one of the policy goals at the organizational, community, city, county, state, or federal level.

Community Opportunities Fund Implementation

COF is being implemented in four separate cycles of funding. Cycles One and Two provided funding for both types of COF activities described above. In each of these funding cycles, a set of grantees was selected for organizational capacity building and a set of grantees was selected for policy and advocacy activities.

After the conclusion of the Cycle Two grantee selection process, First 5 LA began development of a new strategic plan that would cover the period of fiscal year 2009 through fiscal year 2015. Given the new place-based approach identified in the planning efforts for the FY 2009-2015 Strategic Plan, COF was separated by the two types of COF grants—capacity building and policy and advocacy for Cycles Three and Four. All policy/advocacy grantees would be selected and funded in Cycle Three and all capacity building grant selection would be conducted within Cycle Four. This allows time for the selection of new place-based communities in which organizational capacity building funds would be focused.

III. Cycles One and Two

The first two cycles of COF funded a total of 29 organizations, including six policy and advocacy and 23 organizational capacity building grants. In Cycle One, the Commission approved awards for 14 projects for a total award amount of \$3,137,160 and for the second funding cycle of COF the Commission approved 15 projects for a total award amount of \$3,192,472 including over \$2 million to be invested in agencies or collaboratives new to First 5 LA, per a 60/40 ratio directed by Commission Liaisons.

As collaborative efforts among organizations are especially critical for policy and advocacy work, an interdepartmental staff team facilitate quarterly meetings among the six policy and advocacy COF grantees. The meetings provide opportunities for peer learning, technical assistance, networking, and cross-project collaboration. A recent meeting included a workshop on evaluation of policy projects, provided by staff from the Research and Evaluation department. The six recommended applicants for Cycle Three would be added to the existing network to further collaborative and peer learning opportunities among all policy and advocacy grantees.

IV. Cycle Three: Application and Review Process

To further improve the application and review process, the third funding cycle of COF employed a more streamlined one-stage application process, requiring applicants to submit a full project proposal. Eligible agencies could apply for a maximum of \$500,000 for policy and advocacy activities to be distributed over a period of no more than five years.

A. Outreach

In preparation for Cycle Three, staff conducted outreach to communicate COF criteria to potential applicants. Outreach especially focused on organizations that have no history of funding with First 5 LA in order to successfully reach the 60 percent minimum proportion of new grantees from across Los Angeles County. The intent of COF outreach for Cycle Three was to increase access to First 5 LA's funding resources by linking COF with the needs and interests of potentially underfunded organizations throughout Los Angeles County.

B. Proposal Workshop

Following the outreach period, a proposal workshop was held at First 5 LA to introduce potential applicants to the specifics of the fund, including COF Policy Goals, instructions on applying, and also allowed an open forum for addressing questions. The Proposal Workshop was attended by 72 individuals, more than half of whom represented organizations that had not previously received a First 5 LA grant.

C. Proposal Phase

The narrative required an in-depth explanation of how the applicant's proposed policy and advocacy activities would achieve their goals and how they would support the COF Policy Goals through the implementation of the proposed policy and advocacy activities. The proposal also required an evaluation plan and timeline for implementation.

External Review

Proposals were submitted by 21 agencies before September 11, 2009. Proposals were comprised of the proposal narrative, a project budget, and other supporting financial documents. The proposals were reviewed by both internal and external teams to assess the different components of the applicants' submissions.

An external review team was recruited from the nonprofit, public, and grantmaking sectors. From the strong pool of resumes submitted, staff selected 6 policy and advocacy reviewers through a competitive external reviewer selection process. Each participating reviewer was selected for his/her expertise in developing and/or implementing policy and advocacy programs, as well as his/her experience relating to one or more of the COF Policy Goals.

Each reviewer rated all qualified proposals submitted utilizing a tool created by staff to measure, with as little subjectivity as possible, the criteria outlined below. As was the case with previous cycles, proposal applicants were provided with the review tool as part of their proposal packets. This tool was also posted along with the RFP on the First 5 LA website. The reviewers participated in a training prior to beginning review to develop consistency among reviewers' interpretation of the tool and to provide oversight of the process. Following individual scoring, the reviewers participated in a group consensus meeting. Consensus discussions allowed the reviewers to vet their individual evaluations with one another in relation to the criteria identified below, and allotted time for rescored applicants based upon justifications made during discussions. The proposal questions are identified in Appendix C.

The external panel members were responsible for reviewing and discussing the proposal narrative based upon the following criteria:

- a. Viability and level of impact on the selected Policy Goal
- b. Value added to applicant organization and First 5 LA
- c. Identification of need for the project
- d. If applicable, explanation of collaborative structure and definition of roles
- e. Awareness of the policy environment and viability of producing policy change

Internal Review

Following the external review, staff conducted site visits of the top ranked proposal applicants utilizing a site visit review tool drawn from criteria outlined in the proposal. Site visits allowed for reviewers to gain additional knowledge regarding the applicant's relationship to its target community, its capacity and readiness to implement the proposed policy and advocacy project, the value added to the agency's ability to conduct policy and advocacy activities by the project, and to address specific questions that were identified during the proposal review. Staff also ensured that all proposal applicants were in compliance with any past or current First 5 LA grants.

The internal reviewers held a separate consensus meeting to discuss the applicants in relation to staff concerns drawn from financial and external reviewer observations. The internal review was designed to complement the external review process and to confirm or clarify the project as described in the proposal. As was the case in the first and second cycles, the site visits greatly impacted the assessment of the applicants and provided insight into the potential investment.

Financial Review

The Finance department reviewed financial documents including each agency's independent audit or IRS form 990, operating budget, and the proposed project budget. Finance staff additionally assisted in identifying questions to address during site visits.

Additional Review Considerations

At least 60 percent of selected agencies are required to have either no funding history with First 5 LA or be partnering with an organization new to First 5 LA.

Proposal Recommendations

Six proposal recommendations are recommended to the Board of Commissioners for Cycle Three COF funding. A description of each recommended project is provided in Appendix A. As intended by the responsive nature of COF, the recommendations include a diversity of applicants and projects, each of which has been designed to include a viable plan to sustaining impact on one of the COF Policy Goals.

The selected applicants have exhibited excellence in relation to their organizational strengths, relationship to their target population, project design, capacity to implement the proposed activities, and potential to impact the selected COF Policy Goal. They have each demonstrated success at the external, internal, and site visit components of review among a pool of exceptional proposal applicants.

V. Next Steps

A. Feedback Opportunities

Similar to the opportunity allotted to those agencies declined in previous cycles, all proposal applicants not funded for this cycle will have an opportunity to discuss the review of their proposal.

B. Contract Negotiations

Following the approval of the recommended applicants by the Board of Commissioners, staff will begin contract negotiations with the selected applicants. In March, 2010, approved proposal applicants will be invited to attend a new grantee orientation in order to begin the grant agreement process. Attendees will also be informed of opportunities for grantee support and facilitated peer learning that will be available following contract finalization and throughout the grant duration.

The determination of the final selections and funding amounts awarded are dependent upon the Board of Commissioners approval as well as a successful grant agreement process. The grant awarded will not exceed the amount recommended, however in some cases it may be less depending on the final grant negotiation process.

Appendix A
Applicants Recommended for Cycle Three Funding

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Advancement Project	
<i>Collaborative Partner: Preschool California</i>	
Policy Goal: <i>Expansion of Early Head Start, Head Start, and State Preschool programs in underserved areas</i>	
Total Amount Requested (Not to exceed): \$ 500,000	Duration of Project: 5 years
Service Planning Area(s): 2, 4, 6, 7	
Project Summary	
<p><i>Project Title:</i> Advocating for Early Care and Education (ECE) expansion through facilities policy platform</p> <p><i>Brief Project Description:</i> Advancement Project (AP) and Preschool California will advocate for Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to increase the allocation of ECE facilities funding in order to support and expand State Preschool, Early Head Start and Head Start in underserved areas.</p> <p><i>Primary Policy/Advocacy Activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocate for increased LAUSD capitol investment in early care and education (ECE) for ECE facilities in underserved areas by ensuring that an adequate amount of funding is dedicated ECE from past bond measures including Measure Q that passed in November 2008 ○ Cultivate and educate key ECE champions within LAUSD’s Facilities Division, School Board, and Bond Oversight Committee in their efforts to stop the diverting of funding, and assemble a broad coalition of allies to support ECE funding efforts ○ Conduct research and develop policy briefs based on quantitative gap analyses and mapping of past ECE facilities allocations, successes and failures in addressing ECE; number of unserved young children due to facilities shortages, district wide and by individual district; opportunities for conversion of existing K-5 classrooms (due to declining enrollment) into early education classrooms; and geographical mapping of access disparities ○ Undertake an advocacy campaign to ensure that an ECE leader is appointed to the BOC with the Los Angeles Preschool Advocacy Initiative (“LAPAI”) secured as nominating body ○ Ensure early learning expansion is incorporated into School Board’s regular conversations by attending, monitoring and giving public testimony in support of ECE facilities expansion at relevant school board and facilities committee meetings 	

Alliance for a Better Community (ABC)*New Grantee**Collaborative Partner: National Council of La Raza (NCLR)***Policy Goal:***A strong early learning workforce system which has the capacity to recruit, train, retain, and advance the careers of professional, culturally competent staff reflective of the communities they serve***Total Amount Requested****(Not to exceed):**

\$ 361,562

Duration of Project:

2 years

Service Planning Area(s):

1,2,3,4,5

Project Summary*Project Title:*

Dual Language Learner Teacher Competencies (DLLTC) Project

Brief Project Description:

The DLLTC project will convene teacher competency and dual language learner experts to develop a report that supports the learning of diverse children and families.

Primary Policy/Advocacy Activities:

- Launch project with national experts advisory committee retreat
- Develop the framework for the DLLTC project
- Convene national experts to serve as an advisory group that develops a report that addresses the cultural and linguistic needs of dual language learners
- Provide specific policy and advocacy recommendations for dual language teacher competencies
- Lead an advocacy and policy campaign to inform key local and state stakeholders as well as the ECE delivery systems of the findings so that identified competencies are adopted thereby leading to systems change
- Release and launch of report via press release and briefing with key stakeholders
- Adoption of teacher competencies that address cultural and linguistic needs of dual language learners by key ECE delivery systems and workforce development bodies

Asian and Pacific Islander Obesity Prevention Alliance (APIOPA) *New Grantee*

Collaborative Partners: Little Tokyo Service Center (fiscal sponsor), Safe Active Family Environments (SAFE), Guam Communications Network (GCN) and Tongan Community Service Center (TCSC)

Policy Goal:

Improvement of public park facilities in SPA 8 through policy and advocacy initiatives, including family programs to promote physical activity and health nutrition

**Total Amount Requested
(Not to exceed):**
\$ 500,000

Duration of Project:
5 years

Service Planning Area(s):
8

Project Summary

Project Title:

Safe Active Family Environments (SAFE) for Asian and Pacific Islanders (APIs)

Brief Project Description:

Improvement of public park facilities in SPA 8 through policy and advocacy initiatives, including family programs to promote physical activity and health nutrition.

Primary Policy/Advocacy Activities:

- Advocate that public parks adopt standards for safety, cleanliness and culturally competent family programming to promote active and healthy lifestyles building upon APIOPA's pilot project to increase access to physical activity in Pacific Islander neighborhoods.
- Adoption and implementation of SAFE guidelines for Pacific Islander neighborhoods in the South County region of Los Angeles.
- Give SAFE certifications to accommodating parks with approval from the County or City department overseeing the process
- Outreach and education will be an ongoing activity including expanding a social marketing campaign and developing more educational materials about Pacific Islander health trends and the need for children to maintain a healthy weight using local resources

Childrens Hospital Los Angeles

Previously Funded (partnership with new grantee)

Collaborative Partner: American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP Chapter 2)

Policy Goal:

Comprehensive, affordable and continuous health insurance coverage for all young children. Cover all children in families under 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and provide affordable options for those above 300% of FPL.

Total Amount Requested

(Not to exceed):

\$ 500,000

Duration of Project:

4 years

Service Planning Area(s):

All SPAs

Project Summary

Project Title:

Los Angeles Healthcare Provider Alliance for Children (HPAC)

Brief Project Description:

Mobilize healthcare providers to advocate for achieving universal, comprehensive, and affordable health care coverage for all children.

Primary Policy/Advocacy Activities:

- o An interactive website will be developed for HPAC that will include policy papers, links to data and research, a policy calendar, sample advocacy tools, and a mechanism for directly contacting policymakers
- o Creation of a rapid response network (RRN) to assist in timely advocacy action when needed
- o Hold Town hall meetings at least once per year in each Service Planning Area (SPA)
- o Visit government agencies and officials at least once per year, with ad hoc visits as needed for RRN issues. The visits will also serve as an opportunity for newly trained advocates to develop legislative advocacy skills.
- o Starting in Year 2, the coalition will hold an annual symposium. The event will be an opportunity to meet with other coalition members, community-based organizations, and policymakers. The conference will include more in-depth training workshops, and HPAC members will share findings and experiences from the project so far.

Great Beginnings for Black Babies Inc.		<i>New Grantee</i>
<i>Collaborative Partner: Arts and Minds</i>		
Policy Goal: <i>Reduce maternal alcohol and drug use (including nicotine) to increase positive, nurturing environments for young children</i>		
Total Amount Requested (Not to exceed): \$ 329,531	Duration of Project: 2.5 years	
Service Planning Area(s): 1,2,3,4,5		
Project Summary		
<i>Project Title:</i> Impacts of Maternal Substance Abuse on the Disproportionate Number of African American Children in Foster Care		
<i>Brief Project Description:</i> Assess impacts of maternal substance use on the disproportionate number of African American children in foster care, evaluating policies to be modified to improve this problem.		
<i>Primary Policy/Advocacy Activities:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Completion of research on the problem of maternal substance abuse and the impacts on children, families, communities, and the health and dependent children systems ○ Convening of a blue-ribbon committee of community stakeholders who are involved with target population (e.g. DCFS social workers and administrators, public officials, policy makers, law enforcement, substance abuse treatment agencies, foster care agencies, hospital administrators & social workers, kinship care givers and women with children in recovery) ○ Completion of comprehensive report on research findings and development of recommendations for policy and systems change ○ Designing a social marketing campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of maternal substance use and its impacts ○ Development of an intervention strategy to encourage mothers to seek substance abuse counseling and programs; improving the process of identifying mothers in the hospital during delivery who test positive and/or have a history of substance abuse and linking them with wrap-around services ○ Promotion of system change with DCFS as it relates to African American children (0-5) in foster care 		

Historic Filipinotown Health Network Collaborative		<i>New Grantee</i>
<i>Collaborative Partner: Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA), Pilipino Workers Center, Asian Pacific Health Care Venture, and Milestone Consulting</i>		
Policy Goal: <i>Reduced maternal alcohol and drug use [including nicotine] to increase positive nurturing environments for young children</i>		
Total Amount Requested (Not to exceed): \$ 499,040	Duration of Project: 5 years	
Service Planning Area(s): All SPAs		
Project Summary		
<i>Project Title:</i> Los Angeles County Filipino American Health & Wellness Study		
<i>Brief Project Description:</i> The Historic Filipinotown Health Network will conduct the Los Angeles County Filipino American Health & Wellness Study.		
<i>Primary Policy/Advocacy Activities:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expand the geographic scope of the study <i>Culture and Health Among Filipinos and Filipino-Americans in Central Los Angeles</i> to reach all of the heavily Filipino-populated areas of Los Angeles County with a focus directly on maternal-child health issues especially those related to substance use including prenatal alcohol and drug use, substance use by parents of young children and second-hand smoke exposure ○ Reconstituting and activating the Historic Filipinotown Health Network (HFHN) and establishment of baseline measurements of maternal alcohol and drug use, data collection and reporting as an expansion of existing HFHN study to include specific maternal health issues ○ Facilitation of one or more town hall meetings to receive input on study findings ○ Making of recommendations to public policy-makers, health care providers, and service delivery participants that will ultimately result in reduced maternal alcohol, tobacco, and substance use among the Filipino and Filipino-American population ○ Overseeing the publication of a comprehensive report detailing the study findings and resulting recommendations by Milestone Consulting ○ Holding of symposium to advocate for implementation of report recommendations, seeking buy-in from decision-makers and community leaders 		

Appendix B Strategic Plan Goal Statements and COF Policy Goals

The following are policy goals selected for COF Cycle Three from the First 5 LA Policy Agenda and coordinated with the Strategic Plan's four priority goals. Applicants were requested to select one of the COF policy goals as the long-term target for the project. The likelihood for achievement of the identified policy goal was the driving factor in review and selection of applicants.

Children are Ready for Kindergarten

- Universal, voluntary family assessments that are linked to family supports, including home visitation.
- Long term sustainability for universal preschool.
- Early identification of children with developmental and/or behavioral concerns using high quality validated screening tools in pediatric, home and community settings.
- Expansion of Early Head Start, Head Start, and State Preschool programs in underserved areas.
- A strong early learning workforce system which has the capacity to recruit, train, retain, and advance the careers of professional, culturally competent staff reflective of the communities they serve.
- Wage incentives tied to higher quality standards for child care.

Children are Safe from Abuse and Neglect

- Reduced maternal alcohol and drug use [including nicotine] to increase positive, nurturing environments for young children.
- Family-centered interventions for children who have disabilities or developmental, mental health, learning, or behavioral issues.
- Improved access to high quality child care and preschool for children whose families are in kinship care, foster care, or the probation or parole systems.

Children are Born at a Healthy

- Comprehensive, affordable and continuous health insurance coverage for all young children. Cover all children in families under 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and provide affordable options for those above 300% of FPL.
- Perinatal depression screening as a universal standard of care, and increased treatment options.
- Increased supports for breastfeeding, including hospital based "Baby Friendly" programs.

Children Maintain a Healthy Weight

- Increased availability and affordability of healthy food options in low-income or minority neighborhoods.
- Improvement of public park facilities, including family programs to promote physical activity and healthy nutrition.
- Inclusion of higher levels of physical activity in early childhood education settings.
- Medi-Cal benefits for two years postpartum to improve maternal health and subsequent birth outcomes.

Appendix C

Proposal Questions

1. Project Description

- a. Please summarize your project. Include what First 5 LA policy goal the project will support and how your plan for the project supports the goal.
- b. By the completion of your policy and/or advocacy project, what changes or outcomes do you expect to have accomplished?
- c. What are the primary policy and/or advocacy activities you are proposing to implement with the project? If you are collaborating with other organization(s) on this project, please identify which organizations will be responsible for which activities. Include a timeline for the activities.
- d. What will be the key benchmarks or milestones you will achieve in this policy and advocacy project as a result of the proposed activities?
- e. What policy and/or advocacy tools will the project utilize? (For example, coalition building, letter writing, advocacy training for community members, etc.)
- f. Which decision-maker(s), system(s) or organizations(s) will be targeted by the project in order to change public policy? How will you ensure effective engagement with this target and what is your organization's past history working with this entity?

2. Project Rationale

- a. Describe the community condition(s) your policy and advocacy efforts will address through the grant.
- b. How did you select your proposed policy and advocacy activities and why are these activities most likely to contribute to accomplishment of the policy goal?
- c. What is the current political/policy environment related to the issue you plan to address, and how will it affect the success of your project? What challenges or barriers does it present?
- d. Describe your organization's capacities and readiness to implement the proposed policy and advocacy project. Include your past policy and advocacy experience as it relates to the policy goal.
- e. What resources does your organization bring to the project and how will this grant allow you to secure additional resources to implement the project activities?

3. Project Evaluation and Monitoring

- a. What data will you collect to ensure that you arrive at the benchmarks and achieve the policy goal outlined in Section 1 above?
- b. How will you utilize that data to improve your policy and advocacy work during the course of the project?
- c. Will you utilize an outside evaluator or does your organization have sufficient internal expertise to evaluate the project?

4. Collaboration (Please complete ONLY if you will be working in partnership with another organization(s) on project.)

- a. What organization(s) do you intend to collaborate with to implement the proposed policy and advocacy project?
- b. Describe the nature of the relationship(s) including the level of formality, past experience collaborating, accountability structure, etc.
- c. Explain how the collaboration between your organizations will be more effective than if each of you worked individually.

Appendix D

Previous Grantees

Cycle One Grantees

Capacity Building

Bienvenidos Children's Center
Catholic Healthcare West
Community Health Alliance of Pasadena
Connections for Children
Foothill Family Service
Friends of the Family
INMED Partnerships for Children
Long Beach Day Nursery
Mothers Club Community Center Inc
Para Los Niños
Westside Children's Center Inc.

Policy and Advocacy

California Center for Public Health Advocacy
LA County Perinatal Mental Health Taskforce
(led by LA Best Babies Network)
Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center

Cycle Two Grantees

Capacity Building

Center for Nonviolent Education and Parenting
Child Care Information Service
Counseling 4 Kids
The Help Group Child and Family Center
Miller Children's Hospital Lactation Support Program
Mission City Community Network
Pathways LA
QueensCare Family Clinics
South Central Los Angeles Regional Center
The Village Family Services
Venice Family Clinic
Westside Infant-Family Network

Policy and Advocacy

Breastfeeding Taskforce of Greater LA
Community Coalition Prevention Network
and Casey Family Programs Collaborative
Maternal and Child Health Access
and Community Clinic Association of LA County