
Responsive Giving Fund:

Capacity Building and Policy and Advocacy

Final Report

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For:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2006, the First 5 LA Commission approved a \$13 million Responsive Giving Fund (RGF), which aims to improve the health and well being of children prenatal to 5 and their families in the areas of supporting parents and caregivers, nutrition, physical activity, oral health, and prevention of unintentional injury. The Responsive Giving Fund is distinctive in First 5 LA's history in that it is an unsolicited (open) grantmaking program, which will exclusively fund capacity building, and policy and advocacy approaches to addressing the long term programmatic goals delineated above.

Given somewhat limited experience in these funding strategies, and policy and advocacy in particular, First 5 LA engaged a consulting team assembled by Public Health Foundation Enterprises (PHFE) to research and report best practices in capacity building, policy and advocacy.

Over a 10 week period, the consulting team (Flo Green, Cynthia Jones, Dr. David Maurrasse, José Montaña, and Julie Tugend) assessed the state of First 5 LA's existing approaches to capacity building, policy and advocacy, conducted an external review of literature addressing capacity building, policy and advocacy, interviewed organizations and foundations locally and nationally with respect to these issues, and developed findings and recommendations in consultation with commission staff.

Overall, the consulting team treats capacity building, advocacy, and policy as a continuum; the three concepts, while viewed as distinct, should be understood in accordance with their natural integration. In order for a community-based organization to influence policy, it must possess certain organizational and programmatic capabilities, and must engage in some form of advocacy. Organizations require the capacity to stay informed, develop policy strategies, raise awareness, organize constituents, and galvanize interest around some common cause over a long period. However, realistically, one community based organization can accomplish only so much; therefore, networks of multiple organizations are best suited to bring about true impact in the policy arena.

The team recognizes that in addition to building the capacity of organization and networks to conduct policy work, building the capacity of individual organizations to improve operations and programs is an equally important element of the RGF program design. Organizational capacity building is essential to the effectiveness of any nonprofit. Most nonprofits are confronted with significant challenges in the areas of managing and securing resources, governing, planning, evaluating success and various other aspects of management and administration. Subsequently, an entire field of practice to provide management assistance to nonprofits has emerged. The role of these "capacity builders" in supporting the

organizational development of non-profits doing work in the priority areas is an important consideration for First 5 LA given its limited staff resources.

In addition, while conducting internal and external research, it became clear that an inherent tension exists between some of the best practices in policy and advocacy in particular and the responsive and somewhat short-term nature of this fund. Namely, the trend is for funding agencies to establish a long range vision for policy change first, create a program design and grantee selection process around that vision and develop some forum or network through which selected grantees can refine a policy vision, learn from each other, and act toward a set of goals drawing upon their respective strengths. This type of funding approach is estimated to take upwards of 5-10 years to achieve results. In the area of capacity building, there are some particular inherent challenges as well, most notably the difficulty in linking changes in organizational capacity to measurable outcomes in the funding priority areas, especially given both the responsive and time-constrained nature of this fund. In addition, both of these funding strategies require significant ongoing support to be effective in achieving program outcomes in the long run.

Nonetheless, responsive and open grantmaking provides First 5 LA an opportunity to listen to and invest in community driven ideas as well as experiment with and learn from models and approaches developed by community-based partners. Consequently, the consulting team approach concentrated on ways to maximize the impact of this fund given the nature of its particular challenges, opportunities and position within the larger context of First 5 LA's current and future investments.

An extensive literature review and interviews helped inform the consulting team's ideas. The literature review revealed that capacity building has been addressed independent of advocacy and policy. In accordance with First 5 LA's intentions for the Responsive Giving Fund, the consulting team decided to focus on capacity building for organizations as opposed to individuals or entire communities given that First 5 LA funds organizations, which are expected to provide services to individuals and improve the well being of communities. Organizational capacity building takes form around infrastructure (management, administration, finance, governance, etc.) and programming.

Numerous lessons and best practices emerged from the research. Highlights include the importance of tailoring capacity building to the unique needs of particular organizations and the significance of building organizations that can adapt, learn, and grow over time – what has become known as “learning organizations. Peer learning as a means of enhancing the capacity of organizations is also generally recommended.

Literature on the capacity to effectively engage in advocacy and policy emphasizes the importance of a clear vision and long term commitments and

investments to achieve optimal results. An important best practice is that successful policy and advocacy efforts tend to emerge through coalitions. Multiple organizations and constituents collaborate to achieve policy changes. These coalitions operate in constantly changing environments -- policymakers change, priorities change. However, successful collaborative advocacy and policy efforts are able to adapt to these shifts and make changes mid course.

Numerous interviews with First 5 LA grantees, capacity building providers, national and local foundations, and others provided additional insights to the consulting team. Many of the conclusions from the literature review were affirmed in these discussions. The interviews did provide additional nuances and understanding around the limited resources allocated for capacity building in Los Angeles County, the importance of cultural competency and sensitivity, and the challenges of integrating advocacy and policy into organizations' core work.

Interviews with foundations provided some wisdom that can be particularly instructive to First 5 LA as a funding agency. Findings from these interviews suggest that First 5 LA address its own ability to be a learning organization – how to adapt, how to develop a long term strategy, yet review and reflect along the way. Funding agencies approach capacity building in various ways, often contracting with intermediaries and individual capacity builders to provide guidance to grantees. With respect to policy and advocacy, misconceptions and fear persist around what can and cannot be supported. However, foundations have traditionally supported advocacy and policy through research, coalition building, public education, media, and litigation.

As a result of this extensive research and an assessment of First 5 LA, the consulting team has made a series of recommendations on how to best utilize the Responsive Giving Fund to increase the capacity of organizations serving children prenatal to 5 and influence relevant policies through effective advocacy both now and in the future.

Key recommendations are as follows:

Section I Contextual

- Position the Responsive Giving Fund as a *bridge fund* between past and future funding, as well as between and across funding initiatives and departments.

Section II Grantmaking

- Use a *phased approach* to implementing the fund, considering the first round of grants as a learning phase.
- Develop grantee selection criteria.

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- Establish a subset of grantees as a “*policy network*” to provide peer learning and networking and help develop and implement RGF policy goals and strategies.
 - Utilize internal and external expertise to select a grantee cohort best suited to fill critical service gaps as well as build the foundation for future First 5 LA work on behalf of prenatal to 5 and their families.
 - Ensure accessible communication, including sensitivity to language and culture.
 - Use bridge fund concept to further refine grantee selection with an eye toward the future.
 - Combine the use of a learning and case study approach to evaluate overall fund effectiveness with more customized evaluation approach to individual grants and cluster evaluations.

Section III Ongoing Support

- Design a learning community of grantees that buys into a common vision, fosters a learning environment (including trainings), and engages in peer learning;
- Invest in capacity building provider infrastructure necessary to help First 5 LA grantees develop programmatic, operational and policy and advocacy capacity to achieve desired long-term outcomes.

Section IV Leveraging Internal and External Resources

- Create opportunities for staff, management and board to learn from the work it supports, from each other and from experts and practitioners in the field.
- Use RGF as an opportunity to bridge the Commission’s different initiatives.
- Seek ways to align grantmaking and auxiliary Commission resources behind agency-wide policy goals.
- Develop partnerships with other funding agencies with similar interests to extend the impact of grants

Throughout the consulting team’s research, the concept of learning and adapting repeatedly emerged. An active approach to interdepartmental learning is clearly already ingrained in the organization’s culture and practice. In order for First 5 LA to be successful in any of its endeavors, it is important to continually strengthen internal capacity to reflect and grow including being able to take some risks, and even fail, at times. First 5 LA can enhance its capacity to act as a “learning organization” by creating opportunities for staff, management, and the Board of Commissioners to continue to learn from its work and the experiences and expertise of others.

I. INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Definitions

The purpose of this report is to inform the grantmaking strategy for the capacity building and policy and advocacy elements of First 5 LA's new Responsive Giving Fund (RGF). The contents of this document are the result of an intensive research collaboration coordinated by Public Health Foundation Enterprises (PHFE). This team (Florence Green, Cynthia Jones, David Maurrasse, José Montaña, Julie Tugend) will heretofore be called, "the consulting team".

This report makes frequent references to "capacity building", "policy", and "advocacy". The consulting team defines these terms as follows:

Capacity Building

- Within First 5 LA Responsive Giving Fund, capacity building is defined as those organizational developmental activities that build and sustain growth and effectiveness of resident groups, organizations or coalitions of organizations to impact the healthy growth and development of children prenatal through five, and their families. Capacity building should be seen as an ongoing process of actions that helps organizations to strengthen their ability to carry out their programmatic priorities, improve overall organizational (operational) function and impact, and increase the ability to do effective policy and advocacy work.
- Examples of capacity building for program and/or operational sustainability may include creating or developing:
 - viable financial models,
 - diversified funding streams,
 - effective governance and leadership,
 - planning mechanisms,
 - strong staff and staff development plans, or
 - an ability to take advantage of opportunities for growth and impact.
- Capacity building for policy and advocacy, on the other hand, may include developing and/or strengthening:
 - organizational commitment and unifying vision to policy and advocacy,
 - adequate funding for operations (that funds policy and advocacy),

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- dedicated policy staff,
 - sustainability of policy and advocacy work over time,
 - organizational networks/partnerships, or
 - the collection of critical data and analysis of policy and relationships with policy makers.

Policy and Advocacy

- Advocacy and policy are generally related actions or activities that build public support for private and/or public goals that promote and positively impact the healthy growth and development of children prenatal through five and their families in Los Angeles County.

Advocacy is the effort to raise awareness and influence public policy for local impact, from the neighborhood to the county level, through various forms of persuasive communication and education.

Simply put, policy is a plan of action to guide decisions and actions. Policies can be understood as political, procedural, management, financial, and administrative mechanisms arranged to achieve explicit goals. In other words, policy comprises those statements, guidelines or prevailing practices enacted by those in authority to control or influence institutional, community and, sometimes, individual behavior, as well as those that direct resources toward specific guidelines and prevailing practices.¹

- Examples of policy and advocacy may include:
 - Planning and executing direct policy and advocacy activities,
 - Collecting and using data and needs assessments,
 - Mapping assets,
 - Building coalitions,
 - Generating direct involvement of constituents, or
 - Employing strong media strategies (including the use of “new media,” such as the internet and cell phones).

This report can be understood in four major parts:

1. *A Literature Review* – The consulting team conducted an intensive external and internal review of writing on capacity building, policy and advocacy. This section of the report captures some of the major findings

¹ The advocacy and policy definitions are largely taken from the “A” Frame for Advocacy Project based out of The INFO Project at the Bloomberg School for Public Health at Johns Hopkins University.

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- from key trends and themes gleaned from the literature. It also discusses implications and considerations for First 5 LA.
2. *Interview Results* – In order to provide greater insight and nuance to the results of the literature review, the consulting team interviewed a wide variety of relevant parties: local and national foundations, grantees, capacity building providers and others. This section provides an overview of results from the interviews to enrich the emerging themes that ultimately informed the recommendations.
 3. *Findings and Implications* – The consultant team synthesized key findings for capacity building, policy and advocacy and, for both, highlighted several implications for First 5 LA that influenced recommendations.
 4. *Recommendations* – The consulting team filtered the wide array of ideas and themes from the review of literature and interviews, along with an assessment of First 5 LA’s unique situation, to compose recommendations to assist in the development of an effective Responsive Giving Fund that builds capacity, enhances advocacy, and informs policy on behalf of children prenatal to 5 and their families.

First 5 LA’s Responsive Giving Fund will enhance its existing efforts to support children prenatal to 5 and their families. The Fund intends to support parents and caregivers, good nutrition, physical activity, oral health, and the prevention of unintentional injuries. As was expressed to PHFE and the consulting team, First 5 LA wanted guidance on how to advance these priority areas through capacity building, policy and advocacy, based on the premise that the longest term impact will result from strong and sustainable organizations, organized and educated constituents, and policies that contribute to the well-being of all of Los Angeles’ children and families.

It should be noted that though they are separate activities, capacity building, policy and advocacy can be connected to one another. Organizations that are strong in their programs and administration, for example, serve the interests of their constituents, which should be informed and organized to establish their voice and advance their priorities to be positioned in relevant policy arenas.

Methodology

The consulting team began its work by reviewing the Open Grantmaking Concept Paper and Implementation Plan, and establishing working definitions of the terms capacity building, policy and advocacy. Once the consulting team established a basic understanding of First 5 LA’s standing and interests, and developed its own common lens through which it comprehends capacity building, advocacy, and policy, the team was ready to pursue a *literature review*.

Literature Review

Literature on nonprofits and philanthropy in relation to capacity building, policy and advocacy is varied, emanating from various fields of interest and expressing numerous different intentions. Philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, the business management sector, academics, and consultants all have written on these three interrelated topics. Therefore, the consulting team immersed itself in the various books, journal articles, foundation-commissioned papers, policy institute and think tank studies that comprise this body of literature. This also included investigating First 5 LA's internal documents, asking similar questions concerning capacity building and policy and advocacy, and comparing findings with the other literature.

The bulk of the findings from these writings are discussed further in this document, but it is worth noting here that the concepts of capacity building, policy and advocacy are often treated separately by the literature, yet with implicit connections. While this is distinct from the integrated view of the consulting team that found linkages when capacity building is accomplished for policy and advocacy, the literature provided a number of valuable trends that can help First 5 LA approach how it makes grants, and strengthens its grantees and their ability to influence policy, and their overall organizational effectiveness.

In order to provide a more complete picture, the consulting team interviewed relevant groups – grantees, capacity builders, experts in First 5 LA's funding priority areas, local and national foundations, and others. Indeed, the numerous interviews conducted by the consulting team emphasized the value of providing capacity building for advocacy and policy, along with the repeated reminder that any substantial improvements in the lives of vulnerable children prenatal to 5 and their families require long term approaches and strong networks. On the whole, these interviewees provided a more comprehensive sense of what would be required for an effective Responsive Giving Fund and best position the fund to lead towards outcomes in the priority areas of supporting parents and caregivers, good nutrition, physical activity, oral health and preventing unintentional injury.

Interviews

Grantees

The consulting team interviewed eleven First 5 LA grantees and four service organizations that were not First 5 LA grantees. The missions of these organizations vary. They are also of different budgets, staff size, and experiences with capacity building, policy, and advocacy. Questions addressed their successes and challenges in building their own capacity, their capacity

building needs in policy and advocacy, and policy opportunities within First 5 LA's five priority funding areas in LA County. Individuals interviewed ranged from program directors to executive directors.

Capacity Building Organizations and Policy Experts

In addition, eight capacity building organizations and five policy experts were interviewed. The interviews focused on four key themes: what knowledge and skills effective policy and advocacy organizations need to possess, successful models for building policy and advocacy; best ways to measure and evaluate success in policy and advocacy; policy experts were also asked about the challenges for organizations involved in policy and advocacy.

Funding Agencies

Three types of funding agencies were interviewed: those with a national focus, those funding only in California, and those specifically funding work in Los Angeles. These foundations were selected due to their experience and expertise in funding policy and advocacy; some maintain a focus specifically on child populations, or have a history of responsive grantmaking. The consulting team also reviewed foundation interviews conducted by First 5 LA in 2006. The ten interviews conducted specifically for this project covered a range of areas such as strategies for funding capacity building and policy and advocacy, evaluation practices and theories of change. Interviews also addressed the scope of the funding agencies' commitments and strategies.

Based on the findings from the literature review, interviews, and focus groups, the consultants generated recommendations providing options for First 5 LA to implement capacity building and policy and advocacy aspects of the RGF. Some of the literature and interviews reference practices that utilize lobbying strategies that are briefly referenced within the document. The consultant team recognizes the Commission has some legal restrictions on lobbying and has only included them with the intention of comprehensively capturing activities in the field. Recommendations in this report address grant making including advice on the fund in general, grantee selection and evaluation considerations; ongoing support required for success; and opportunities to leverage internal and external resources for maximum impact of the Commission's investments now and in the future.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

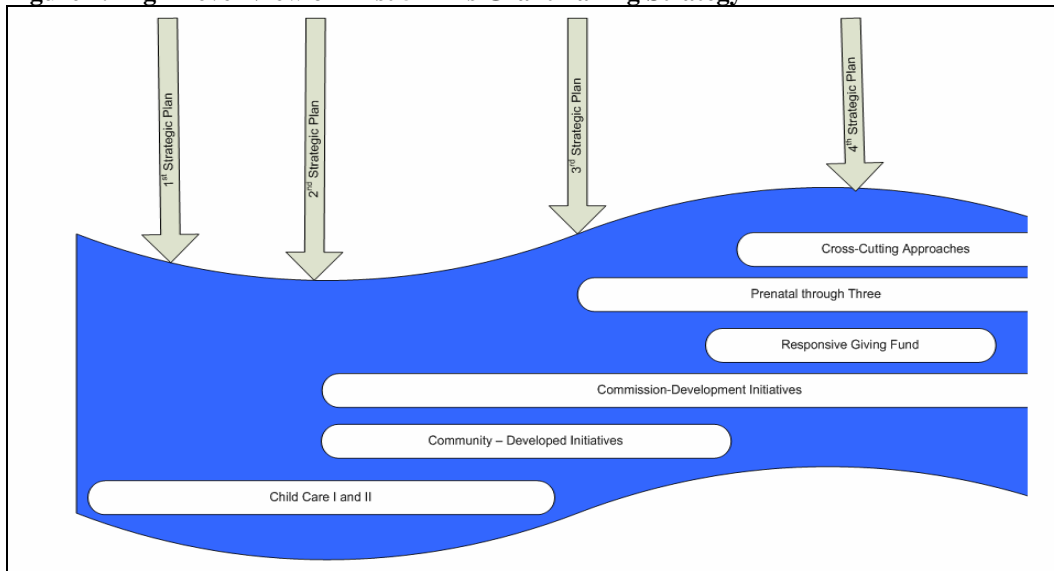
Much of the literature contained in this review is drawn from and written by practitioners based on their observations and experience working in and around nonprofits. Discussions on nonprofit capacity building, policy and advocacy cut across philanthropy, nonprofit management, and more traditional business management. Venture philanthropy is an emerging area that transcends these areas, representing a convergence of nonprofit and for profit thinking.

First 5 LA's written materials include a broad range of documents discussing the evolution of the agency's thinking about capacity building and policy and advocacy. These documents fell into four main categories: policy and planning documents, evaluation write-ups, public dissemination pieces (requests for proposals), and external consultant materials.

First 5 LA staff also provided a diagram capturing their funding streams and the timeline for their strategic planning efforts. The placement of the Responsive Giving Fund among other First 5 initiatives was important in that it ultimately helped determine how some of the findings from both the literature and interviews were translated into recommendations for enhancing the Fund's impact on the priority areas.

As Figure 1 illustrates, the Responsive Giving Fund is being launched after First 5 LA's completion of its first open grantmaking fund, the Community Development Initiative, and concurrently with Prenatal to Three and Cross-Cutting Initiatives. First 5 LA's next strategic plan will be adopted mid-way through the programs lifespan and the RGF exists alongside other Commission Developed Initiatives such as School Readiness, or PFF.

Figure 1. High Level View of First 5 LA’s Grantmaking Strategy



Overall, literature addressing nonprofit capacity building, policy and advocacy remains diverse, reflecting various origins and intentions. For example, some of the literature includes the philanthropic industry’s commissioned research to inform its own strategies. The literature also includes practical “how-to” guides for nonprofits, foundations, and those seeking to enhance their competencies in various aspects of the nonprofit sector. In essence, much of the material is general to nonprofits, but specific information about capacity building, policy and advocacy impacting the prenatal to 5 population in supporting parents and caregivers, nutrition, physical health, oral health, and injury prevention is provided when available.

For the most part, relevant literature on nonprofit capacity, advocacy and policy tends to be practitioner-based and less academic. The literature largely reflects applied intentions, seeking to advise and inform for the sake of improved practice in the nonprofit sector. Academia is gradually, even rapidly, expanding its nonprofit educational infrastructure, but, even in this case, it is practitioners who are governing and teaching programs and curricula on nonprofits.

In conducting this research, significant overlap across capacity building, policy, and advocacy emerged. A significant amount of the literature specifically addressing policy and advocacy discusses how organizations working in the policy arena can enhance their capacity to become more effective advocates and to successfully push or implement policy changes. The literature emphasizing organizational capacity building is similarly instructive around increased effectiveness.

Capacity Building

Capacity can be conceptualized in several ways. In general, the two critical strands of thinking on capacity building are *operational* and *mission-based*:

- Operational views of capacity emphasize management, finance, fundraising, governance – various aspects of management and administration.
- Mission-based thinking on capacity building stresses the ability of organizations to carry out their mission in their particular areas of work – how organizations serve their constituencies, make strides in their issue areas of interest, and impact relevant dialogue and policies. This type of capacity building can also be thought of as “program.”

Within the array of First 5 LA’s materials, definitions of “capacity building” were conceptually diverse, classifying capacity from an individual-, organizational-, systems- or outcome/mission-oriented lens, or sometimes mixing these classifications. Examples in the literature include:

- “Capacity refers to the ability to achieve one’s aspirations within a changing environment, and is about developing core skills to reach potential/achieve goals.” (*Capacity Strengthening Project Report Executive Summary*)
- “Capacity building is activities that improve the ability of a group of residents, an organization or a coalition of organizations that make up a community to support the healthy growth and development of children prenatal through five and their families.” (*First 5LA Open Grantmaking Implementation Plan and Next Five Strategic Plan, 2005-2009*)
- “Capacity Building is the broad umbrella under which the Commission supports systems improvement by providing agencies, communities and individuals the skills, tools and knowledge necessary to solve problems, strengthen relationships and gain greater access to resources.” (*Strategic Plan FY 2001-04: Focusing Our Vision for Young Children In Los Angeles County*)
- “Organizational capacity is an agency’s efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its mission. Capacity strengthening is thus a material and sustainable increase of organizational efficiency and/or effectiveness.” (*Community Developed Initiatives Evaluations, Semics, LLC*)
- “To achieve lasting and meaningful results in its community by improving the overall management capacity of a group, organization, or coalition” (First 5 LA RGF Implementation Plan)

One additional dimension of capacity worth noting in the literature is the ability to measure and demonstrate results. With increasing demand for organizations to demonstrate their effectiveness, capacity also includes the ability to assess, evaluate and learn from performance. It is also important to note that the

consulting team addressed capacity in relation to organizations, not individuals or entire communities. This was a result of organizations being “broadly defined” in the Open Grantmaking Implementation Plan, and because First 5 LA’s grantees are organizations. In this regard, it is important for First 5 LA to consider the capacity of its grantees as organizations and itself as a funding agency.

Major findings from our assessment of the literature on capacity building include:

- One of the most critical capabilities that nonprofits, capacity builders, and funding agencies should possess is the ability to learn, adapt, and grow – the ability to be a *learning organization*²;
- Approaches to capacity building, from the point of view of nonprofits, capacity builders, and funding agencies should stress long term capabilities to sustain organizations and enhance the likelihood of improvements in the lives of constituents served by nonprofits;

This section addresses capacity building approaches and promising practices with respect to nonprofits/grantees, capacity building providers, and funding agencies. Often when capacity building is discussed, the focus is on some process through which capacity building assistance is provided.

The process of capacity building takes form in various ways:

- *One to one* -- Often, individual nonprofit organizations contract with consultants or intermediary organizations (such as Management Support Organizations) to receive guidance and expertise around different aspects of operational and programmatic capacity.
- *Trainings* – Nonprofit organizations also attend trainings and workshops that address trends and promising areas in particular categories (fundraising, Board governance, etc.).
- *Peer Learning* – Nonprofits also learn from each other, not always bringing in consultants, but exchanging ideas with each other. Sometimes, groups of executive directors convene regularly to share experiences and help each other become more effective.

Examples of all three types of assistance are also documented in the internal literature. Among the various initiatives where organizations have used one to

² In the business management literature and increasingly in the nonprofit literature, “learning organizations” are seen as having optimal sustainability. In the business management literature, a learning organization embraces: systems thinking (which includes a broad approach that enables the organization to see how different components work together systematically), personal mastery (which include individual visions), mental models (assumptions that drive the work), building shared vision (collective mission, goals, and values), and team learning (collective action is driven by organizational intelligence) (Senge, 2006). Nonprofit literature similarly describes a learning organization as “Organizations that value gathering information, asking questions, thinking about their work,” (Guthrie, Louie, David & Foster, 2005). Sustainability is one of the most persistent challenges for nonprofits (Light, 2004, 2002; Letts, Ryan, & Grossman, 1999).

one assistance is the Community Developed Initiatives (CDI) Small Grants Program, a fund designed to provide this type of capacity building to small and upstart organizations to prepare to apply for funds. Trainings and peer learning are also present in First 5 LA's work initiatives, such as Partnerships for Families, Health Births, Family Literacy and in the Sustainability Project or as part of the CDI Large Grants Program.

Capacity Building can also occur utilizing internal resources. This often occurs with strategic planning, internal mentoring and developing individual and organizational performance measures. Being a learning organization helps increase the utilization of the invaluable internal resource of staff knowledge.

The literature addresses some general promising practices in relation to how capacity building is provided. For example, the literature tends to suggest that nonprofits must *buy into* the capacity building assistance to be provided. Sometimes a nonprofit has needs that might be obvious to a funding agency, and the funding agency supports capacity building assistance to address those needs. However, if the nonprofit does not see these needs as priorities and does not think assistance is required in these areas, capacity building assistance is unlikely to work. In such a case, the funding agency, the provider of capacity building assistance, and the nonprofit would all likely end up dissatisfied.

By extension, *candor* is another critical cross-cutting promising practice. All with a stake in providing capacity building should be honest and maintain open lines of communication around needs, learning, even issues around culture.

In addition to the promising practices outlined in the external literature, the internal review also discussed other best practices. These include:

- "...Effective capacity building is necessarily varied in form and content, depending on the needs of providers and their populations, as well as the results to be achieved" and tailored to meet organizational needs, not when attempted with a "one size fits all" approach. (*CDI Large Grants Evaluation, Second Year Report, February 2006*)
- Funding capacity building efforts that use and enhance the core strengths and field intelligence of potential grantee organizations; that is, build on what already exists, not on something that does not.
- As a result of having explicit processes and results within CDI Small Grants, smaller organizations had more specific and focused objectives and made more tangible gains in capacity building within CDI Small Grants.

Role of Capacity Builders

Capacity builders can come in a variety of forms as well – a mix of individuals and firms. The Alliance for Nonprofit Management is the national professional association where the diverse field of capacity builders connects. The field of

nonprofit capacity builders is vast and growing; once dominated by individuals and very small firms, this field has begun to include large for profit consulting firms that once paid little or no attention to the nonprofit sector.

In the process of providing capacity building assistance, the Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), a network of funding agencies supporting capacity building assistance to nonprofits, (2004) provide some considerations for capacity builders in their relations with nonprofits. These considerations reflect the significance of the quality of capacity builders:

- Active engagement in a community of practice
- Awareness of Developments in the Field
- Openness to Feedback
- Awareness of personal limitations
- Enthusiasm for sharing learning and for learning from the experience of others
- Expertise and experience directly relevant to the job at hand
- A deep understanding of grantee organizations and their constituents
- Commitment to continual learning and improvement of their own skills
- Commitment to skill building for nonprofit partners
- Ability to look beyond organizational dynamics to see the whole system

Role of Nonprofits

As nonprofit organizations continue to be recipients of capacity building assistance, how they receive such interventions remains an important consideration. The reality is that, in order to be able to take the best possible advantage of outside advice, expertise, and guidance, nonprofits must already possess a certain level of capacity. Some ingredients that could enhance the impact of capacity building interventions for nonprofits include:

- *Effective Leadership* -- (GEO, 2004; Brinckerhoff, 2000) -
- *Strategic Thinking* -- (GEO, 2004) calls this “planfulness”, while others describe it as having a vision (Brinckerhoff, 2000), or succession planning (Furry, 2004; Loza, 2004; Roddy 2004). The latter includes planning the transition for new executive directors and board members.
- *Strong and Effective Governance* -- (GEO, 2004; Brinckerhoff, 2000) Boards remain one of the great untapped resources in the nonprofit sector. Many Boards are ineffective and inactive.

Role of Funding Agencies

Overall, funding agencies can play various roles in capacity building:

- *Funding Intermediaries and Consultants* – Resources can be provided to external intermediary agencies or independent consultants to advise and inform grantees on various aspects of management and programs. This is the most traditional and common way in which funding agencies support capacity building.
- *Developing In House Consulting Arms* – Some funding agencies are beginning to create internal consulting wings to provide assistance to grantees. The Robin Hood Foundation in New York, for example, sees the provision of capacity building as a part of its commitment to grantees and has in house staff to handle this work.
- *Creating High Engagement Relationships* – As discussed in this section, one emerging trend is for funding agencies to engage in long term in depth relationships with select grantees.

GEO has reflected on some of the approaches that funding agencies should take with respect to capacity building:

- *Staying Current*- Ongoing learning allows organizations to continually adapt to the needs of their constituents. When funding agencies are also current on issues, challenges, and opportunities related to grantee work, grantee relations are improved and capacity building assistance is enhanced (GEO, 2004).
- *Reflection*– As nonprofits are to evaluate their outcomes and continually think about their strategies, so should foundations. Reflections should include thinking about internal operations and strategies (GEO, 2004).
- *Humility*– It is important for funding agencies to respect the experiences, specific knowledge, and expectations regarding their work and relating to their constituencies (GEO, 2004; VPP, 2004). This can also mean that funding agencies should be receptive to criticism from grantees.
- *Commitment* -- In the face of a changing environment, organizations must adapt. Funding agencies should consider supporting grantees as they navigate the environment, learn and grow (GEO, 2004). Funding agencies should also comprehend the overall work of grantees beyond what they have specifically funded (Guthrie, Louie, David, & Foster, 2005)
- *Flexibility* -- Funding agencies should be flexible in their approach to grantees. Capacity building needs emerge as grantees face challenges. For example, a nonprofit might be undergoing an executive transition. In such a case the funding agency could help support the search for a new executive director by allowing the grantee to redirect funds initially committed for other purposes (GEO, 2004).

It is also important to note that funding agencies can provide assistance in building the capacity of grantees by providing access to networks, leveraging other resources, and strategic assistance (Venture Philanthropy Partners, 2004). Paul Light's *The Capacity Building Challenge*, Brookings Institute, 2002 provides some insights on the role of funding agencies in capacity building. According to Light, funding agencies only tend to provide oversight over capacity building assistance. He provides some interesting facts on funding capacity building:

1. Average duration of engagements is usually six months to three years. Most common one year.
2. Average size of grants for capacity building: \$10,000 to \$30,000 (one example was \$50,000)
3. Most common purposes of capacity building grants (based on survey of foundations that provide capacity building programs or funding): 65% to improve internal management systems, 16% to improve or strengthen external relationships, 10% build leadership and 9% strengthen internal structure.
4. In the *Nonprofit Effectiveness Project* survey, providers and users of capacity building said that leadership was the keystone of effective organizations yet there is little investment in building that capacity (Paul Light)

High Engagement Philanthropy is a critical emerging trend, where funding agencies work closely with grantees to produce desired result (The development of the Social Venture Fund as a part of First 5 LA's Open Grantmaking is a laudible effort to experiment with this approach.):

- A report on high engagement philanthropy nonprofit effectiveness (Venture Philanthropy Partners, 2004) describes examples of high engagement philanthropy. In both cases the funding agency committed to a four or five year period, the grantee developed a long term strategy for its work, and the funding agency leveraged contacts within its own network for additional advice and support. To initiate these relationships (prior to funding), grantees provided an organizational vision. One of these examples follows:
 - *Edna McConnell Clark Foundation (EMCF) and Harlem Children's Zone - Using a high-engagement approach, EMCF decided to fund six to seven high performing youth-serving organizations instead of 200 as a part an institution-building strategy. During the time of its four-year grant beginning in 2001, EMCF assisted The Harlem Children's Zone in creating a business plan and developing its own evaluation capacity (an example of building in learning capacity). Because of its adherence to producing outcomes and being able to evaluate its work, The Harlem Children's*

Zone is now better able to understand and communicate more about the impact of its work. The operational support also enabled The Harlem Children's Zone to service more children. The annual EMCF allocation to these types of activities is \$25 million and several days of portfolio manager time per month.

- In a 2002 survey of 42 high engagement funders (42% of whom funded youth and education activities and 10% of whom began grantmaking before 1998):
 - two-thirds of the organizations reported grants lasting 4-7 years,
 - many grants began with one-year planning grants
 - over half believed the value of non-monetary support was greater than or equal to monetary support, and
 - 14 made grants ranging from \$25,000-\$75,000, 7 made grants ranging from \$75,000- \$250,000, and 12 made grants ranging from \$250,000 to over \$1 million.

Spending on Capacity Building

In research on funding agencies and direct service providers, Baker, Blegg, and Groves (2006) found that foundations widely vary in the amount of spending on capacity building efforts.

- Foundation-based programs have included providing resource centers, participating in a community capacity-building initiative, coach/training for nonprofits, convening nonprofits, offering assistance on foundation websites, putting representatives of funding agencies on nonprofit boards, education and training for groups of nonprofits, information and referral services, creating infrastructure for peer networking by nonprofits, and needs assessments.
- Infrastructure organizations were supported by \$1.2 million by foundations on average for their infrastructure activities.
- Evaluation efforts have been supported by an average of \$69,000, including evaluation of capacity-building programs.

Administrative expenses averaged \$250,000 per program, ranging from \$240 to \$6.7 million. Such expenses total 7% of capacity-building investments.

First 5 LA's materials contain little information on the average costs and length of time commitment across First 5 LA initiatives. There is, however, specific information for CDI grantees. Within the CDI Large Grants Program, 54 organizations were funded for \$70 million, though not all of this money went directly for capacity building purposes. The time frames for these grants varied, and were 2 -5 years in duration. The Small Grants Program averaged \$23,200 (with a maximum of \$25,000) in grants to childcare providers and community-based organizations for building their capacity. The duration of these grants was 12 months.

Additional Considerations

While capacity building efforts may be engaged for a single organization, the literature shows that capacity building for that organization is significantly influenced by the capacity and perspective of its funding agency and its capacity building provider. In addition, other factors also limit the impact or the ability to demonstrate the impact of capacity building activities.

- *The Significance of Evaluation* -- One of the most significant aspects related to nonprofit capacity is evaluation. As noted by Light, Hubbard, and Kibbe (2006), "Nonprofit capacity building lacks clear metrics". As with capacity-building efforts, there are multiple levels of outcomes: mission impact, grant outcomes, and organizational outcomes. As most efforts focus on the achievement of grant objectives (grant outcomes) (Light et al, 2006), one ongoing challenge is that, some evaluation efforts tend to be specific to programs rather than across portfolios (Common Wealth Ventures, 2002). This makes it difficult to understand the collective impact of a funding agency's capacity-building efforts.
- *The Significance of Cost* – Given the findings of this literature review, emphasizing long term approaches and commitments to enhance capacity, the actual expense to funding agencies can be high.
- *Organizational Needs are Comprehensive* – As capacity building assistance tends to zero in on particular areas (i.e. fundraising, board development), community based nonprofits tend to have needs in a variety of areas. This requires funding agencies and capacity builders to be aware of the broader contexts of nonprofits;
- *Capacity Building is influenced by Multiple Interests* – A funding agency could hold one view on the kind of capacity building assistance that a grantee could pursue, but this grantees' other supporters could stress different priorities. Different internal interests can also shape capacity building priorities and the ability of nonprofits to take advantage of capacity building assistance (Salamon, 2003).

Among the challenges found in the internal literature review are:

- Little information about the ability of capacity building providers and the best practices they use to develop organizational "effectiveness and efficiency"
- Clarity in the effect that capacity building produces. Although the literature mainly focuses on outcomes of capacity, it is unclear what types of outcomes are most valuable for First 5 LA. Should they be service outcomes, quantifiable organizational changes, or the ability to create larger systems changes.
- Lack of consensus around how capacity building for policy and advocacy should be done. In reflecting on this large and diverse body

of literature addressing capacity building, it is clear that capacity building brings numerous challenges. It must be long term, yet change is constant. It must focus on organizational needs, but true change is community wide and multi-organizational. Funding agencies, capacity builders, and nonprofits must share a vision, yet they all represent unique vantage points within the nonprofit, public, and philanthropic arenas.

Policy and Advocacy

As the consulting team learned from the assessment of literature on capacity building, the concepts of capacity building, advocacy and policy are treated separately. By contrast, the consulting team treats the concepts as a continuum based on the insights and experiences of the members of the team. Organizations must maintain a certain level of capacity in order to embark on advocacy efforts and impact policy. These tasks are far more difficult for unstable organizations. In order to achieve policy changes, organizations must be able to engage in a range of activities associated with advocacy, such as educating, organizing, using the media, and communicating with policy makers.

Definitions of advocacy and policy vary, but the concepts are generally more understood than capacity building. Given that capacity building takes form in multiple ways, its definition is more open for diverse interpretations.

Advocacy and policy are interrelated activities that build public support around particular goals. Advocacy is the effort to influence public policy at local and/or national levels and policy is the actual plan of action to guide decisions and actions.³ First 5 LA's internal documents treat advocacy as actions to influence public policy⁴ and policy as the rules, standards, guidelines, and laws that set priorities and allocate resources⁵. These definitions are consistent with those surfacing in the literature. However, First 5 LA treats the two concepts as inextricably linked. The reality is that the two concepts are not always linked – some nonprofits engaged in advocacy are not involved in policy development, and the policy development process is not always a product of the advocacy efforts of nonprofits.

In effect, four types of advocacy and policy literature emerged from the literature: (Examples are outlined in the addendum of this paper)

1. *How-to- do-it literature* – This literature tends to take on a manual format, often meant to accompany technical assistance programs. This literature tends to outline how to do specific tasks, and suggests that nonprofits of any size, type, location or budget can and should engage in policy and advocacy work.
2. *Lessons Learned Literature* – These publications tend to highlight what works and provide guidance through lessons learned from successful advocacy and policy efforts.

³ The advocacy and policy definitions are largely taken from the “A” Frame for Advocacy Project based out of the The INFO Project at the Bloomberg School for Public Health at Johns Hopkins University.

⁴ Taken from the Strategic Plan, FY 2001-04: Focusing Our Vision for Young Children in Los Angeles County.

⁵ Taken from the Next Five Strategic Plan, 2005-2009.

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3. *Case Study Reports* – This literature reports on interest and/or geographic-specific policy initiatives or case studies, describing how an organization or coalition achieved a significant community outcome or legislative outcome.
 4. *Guidelines for Funding Agencies* – Some articles, in particular, provide guidelines specifically for funding advocacy.

Best Practices

A number of best practices in approaches to advocacy and policy emerged in the literature. Ingredients of success are listed below (The first column addresses requirements for success in capacity building stressing management and administration. The second focuses on capacity to engage in policy and advocacy, and essential ingredients that lead to success in this arena):

Capacity Building Generally
(Operational Capacity)

- *Organizational commitment and unifying vision* that informs policy and advocacy activities.
- *Adequate funding* for both operations and advocacy efforts is critical. (NCNA, Drabble, NCRP, CLPI)
- *A dedicated staff person responsible for the policy work.* (NCNA suggested that a board committee or a part-time person could also be responsible).
- *Capacity to do policy and advocacy continuously.*

Policy and Advocacy Capacity

- *Good information/data, and understanding how to use it:* “Lobbying can be carried out in the absence of a financial war chest, without members who vote, and without sophisticated technology. But there are few who can hope to influence policy without being able to provide good information whether it’s grounded in fact, opinion, or rumor.” (Rees)
- *On-going personal contact with policy makers,* personal contact across party lines (Rees)
- *Direct involvement of constituents,* i.e. bringing those directly affected to speak at public hearings.
- *Strong media relations,* sharing policy analysis, briefing editorial writers.
- *Relevant relationships outside of government*
- *A range of strategies,* flexible and responsive to changing circumstances.
- *Effective use of the internet* to connect the community to decision makers, such as web pages with direct links that enable visitors to send messages to targeted decision-makers.

Although First 5 LA has not begun to fund policy and advocacy work en masse, some of the best practices are cited in First 5 LA’s internal paper, “Planning and Development: Policy Knowledge Exchange.” In this document, First 5 LA’s planning and development team outline various examples of how policy and advocacy goals are being developed and implemented within initiatives, and how

those approaches are consistent with the external literature best practices findings. First 5 LA, for example, is paying attention to building organizational capacity that is developing the ability of agencies, collaboratives and communities to institutionalize organizational commitment to inform their policy and advocacy activities.

First 5 LA also prioritizes the ongoing importance of its grantees building relationships and maintaining personal contact with policy makers and their respective staff. Knowing key points of intervention for building the advocacy and policy capacity of constituents, working with the media to create public will, developing and nurturing relationships outside of government, and employing a range of strategies that are flexible and responsive to changing circumstances in the policy environment are also other priority areas for First 5 LA grantees.

Role of Nonprofits in Advocacy and Policy

Nonprofits are increasingly participating in policy and advocacy efforts by nonprofits have increased. (IRS data reveals a 19% increase between 1999 and 2001 in the amount spent on lobbying by 501(c)(3)s reported on their Form 990s.) Nonprofits are being encouraged to engage in policy and advocacy more than ever before. (*Drabble, Baumgartner, OMB Watch, NCPR*)

However, the level and frequency of nonprofit participation in advocacy and policy development is still limited. Reasons noted in the literature were consistent:

- Limited resources to engage in advocacy and policy work;
- Lack of an integrated vision that stresses the connection between organizational mission, advocacy, and policy;
- The continuing belief that nonprofits are not supposed to do advocacy or lobbying, and
- Limited foundation funding and other support for nonprofit policy and advocacy activities. (*Rees, OMB Watch, NCNA, Dabble, Baumgartner, Backer, Light, NCRP, Northern California Grantmakers*)

According to the *Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project (SNAP)*, the top three barriers to policy participation are a) limited financial resources, b) application and understanding of tax laws, and c) limited staff or volunteer skills. These factors cause nonprofits to be overly cautious about engaging in policy and advocacy. Some foundations even erroneously assume that they are somehow prohibited from supporting public policy advocacy. (*NCNA, OMB Watch, NCRP, Baumgartner, Northern California Grantmakers*)

All of the literature agrees that policy and advocacy for nonprofits can yield far greater returns for nonprofit beneficiary communities than direct service alone, and can lead to increased funding streams for organizations. The consulting team's review of policy and advocacy-based literature would seem to validate

First 5 LA's investment in building the general capacity and policy and advocacy capacities of its grantees.

In order for nonprofits to be effective in their advocacy and policy efforts, they should:

1. *Establish themselves as experts* and accessible resources on areas of interest,
2. *Understand the political climate*, and develop strategies that are appropriate to that environment.
3. *Understand technical areas of public policy*, including legislative process, tax and budget policy and the budget process. (NCNA)
4. *Provide linkage* between what is going on in the (grassroots) communities, the (political/administrative) community, direct service work and policy. (Drabble)
5. *Target specific neighborhoods* and communities and empower them as decision-makers. (NCRP, Drabble)
6. *Have access to media* and coverage for policy issues on television, radio and in print. (Drabble)
7. Have a *comprehensive plan and policy agenda*
8. Possess *infrastructure for communicating with policy-makers* and partners regularly and in a timely fashion. (NCNA)
9. *Increase technical assistance and training* for both foundations and nonprofits. (Drabble)
10. *Carefully assess membership strategies*: Membership strategies can bring credibility on the one hand, but construct barriers, on the other. National policy organizations see members as bringing credibility because people pay to join an organization (Rees). An assessment by National Council of Nonprofit Associations found that emerging membership organizations should not let their policy work be constrained by membership.
11. *Include leaders of color*: Leaders of color can add broader support by organizations and communities (PolicyLink, 2003).
12. *Develop realistic and attainable goals, which broaden indicators of success*: Actual policy change is the result of phases of work. In evaluating the effectiveness of advocacy and policy, improving the steps toward policy change is essential to success, and should be acknowledged.
13. *Focus on particular policy priorities*: The number of policy priorities that can be pursued is vast; national policy groups recommend that organizations focus on one or two policy priorities.

Challenges and Considerations Facing Nonprofits in Advocacy and Policy

As indicated, involvement in advocacy and policy is not universal among nonprofit organizations. The literature provides some insights around factors that encourage or discourage involvement.

According to a report by Jennifer Mosley (*What Leads Human Service Nonprofits To Be Involved in Advocacy?.*) nonprofits can exert control over their environments by being involved in advocacy and policy. Greater dependence on government funding, increased collaboration and the professionalism of leadership are all factors that increase the likelihood of an organizations involvement in advocacy and policy.

Public Human Service Nonprofits (HSNPs) can, through advocacy:

- Better serve needy and underrepresented clients,
- Provide a vital feedback loop to see how policy is working "on the ground,"
- Improve the health of the organization,
- Influence their environment and manage their relationship with decision-makers, and
- Build the legitimacy of the organization and the kinds of services provided, how often, and to whom.

In the 2002 Mosley report an hour-long survey of 707 Los Angeles human service nonprofits revealed:

- 62% of respondents participated in advocacy;
- Having more government funding was the strongest single predictor of advocacy activity;
- Likewise, higher professionalism of leadership may increase access to others in positions of power.
- Maintaining many collaborations increases access to knowledge and opportunities to join advocacy coalitions;
- Increased size is also an important predictor of advocacy (having the resources and capacity to participate is important -- being large doesn't lessen the motivation to act);
- Institutional ties and linkages, as well as resources, may be more important in predicting advocacy than organizational structures, such as diversification of funding, and degree of formalization.

Other predictors of involvement in policy work

- A view that one's organization is a leader in their field. (CLPI, Rees)

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- Health and environment organizations most likely to do policy and advocacy work. (Arts and recreation least likely) (OMB Watch study)
 - A belief that mission and policy are connected. (NCNA, CLPI)
 - Staff or volunteers have former policy and advocacy experience. (NCNA)

While organizations with greater resources tend to be more involved in policy work, it is important to note those with limited financial resources can participate in collaborations to lessen advocacy costs. Coalitions can be helpful to small organizations by reducing financial and time costs. (Mark Roseman, "Exploratory Project on Human Service and Civic Engagement," *Enhance* magazine)

Predictors of non-involvement in policy and advocacy

A different angle on the role of nonprofits in advocacy and policy can be found in the *Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project* of OMB Watch, Tufts University and Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest. This survey found that three of four nonprofits (77%) that receive government grants feel that government funding is a barrier to participating in policy matters -- a significant difference from those who do not receive government grants.

- As government funding increases as a share of revenue, so does the perceived barrier to participating in public policy;
- Many nonprofits expressed fear of retribution for engaging in public policy matters.

Role of Funding Agencies in Supporting Policy and Advocacy

Funding agencies support policy and advocacy in various forms. Quite a number of activities, from public education and media work to coalition building maintain elements of advocacy and policy work. Misperceptions among nonprofits and foundations about what can and cannot be done are widespread.

The same OMB report revealed that 58% said that receiving foundation grants is not a barrier to policy work. However, it is a major barrier for those that do not lobby. Some organizations see foundation funding as a statistically significant barrier to policy participation due to the fear that lobbying will jeopardize future funding.

On the foundation side of policy and advocacy, the Alliance for Justice's, *Investing in Change: A Funders Guide to Supporting Advocacy* identifies five key areas in which foundations can support policy:

1. *Public Education.* Examples of public education include distributing informational brochures, posting flyers, holding a rally, or placing information on an organization's website.

2. *Media*. Public education also occurs indirectly through earned and unearned media. Media advocacy is the process of targeting, informing, educating, and securing the support of the media to advance advocacy objectives.
3. *Research*. Research is a tool frequently used by nonprofit organizations to influence public policy. By sharing research results with legislators, the general public, government agencies, and other nonprofits, an organization can effectively spread the word about issues it deems important.
4. *Convening Key Parties*. Some foundations bring together key players to discuss an issue or ways to address it. Those players may include grantees and other public charities, foundations, policymakers, constituent, government administrators, business representatives, and others.
5. *Organizing Individuals or Communities*. Many nonprofits engage in organizing individuals or groups of individuals to work together toward a common goal. For example, a private or public foundation may support a child-focused public charity to organize parents of children with learning disabilities to meet to discuss their concerns about the availability of special education services.

One overarching fact about funding policy and advocacy that surfaced in the literature is that it *must be long term*. Because the policy process is long, it is difficult to imagine short term investments being effective. *Some illustrated examples of how foundations have influenced policy and advocacy:*

The California Wellness Foundation produced a report, “Public Education,” Reflections on Public Policy Grantmaking, by Ruth Holton, The California Wellness Foundation, 2002.) Over the years, the California Wellness Foundation has funded multi-million dollar grants for several high-profile public education campaigns to inform and educate policymakers and opinion leaders on the issues of youth violence, teen pregnancy, health access and tobacco control.

The California Endowment held three public forums in September 2002 to facilitate a substantive dialogue among state and county officials, health policy experts, and the public to help inform efforts to redesign the health care system in Los Angeles County. The county health care system was in crisis resulting from a budget deficit, rising health care costs, and an increasing number of uninsured individuals. The California Endowment issued a report outlining the issues

The California Wellness Foundation

One area of concern for the Foundation was the potential consequences of a state ballot measure, Proposition 188. According to a nonpartisan study, Proposition 188 would have weakened tobacco control laws throughout the state, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in increased health costs.

*The Foundation wanted voters to understand both sides of the debate before casting a vote. Their education campaign took no position, pro or con, on the measure; it simply laid out the facts as they appeared in the ballot pamphlet. Those facts included funders of the Proposition: tobacco companies, and those who opposed the proposition: the American Heart Association’s California affiliate and the American Lung Association of California. The campaign also urged voters to read their ballot pamphlet before voting. The Foundation had no contact with either opponents or supporters of the ballot during the campaign. Within a week of the campaign’s launch, Proposition 188 began to rapidly lose its lead and was defeated by 70 percent. **The savings to California for health care cost that would not be incurred was substantial.***

and recommendations that arose from the forums. The forums helped give a voice to all affected by the crisis. (Alliance for Justice)

Evaluation Approaches

The literature suggests that evaluating advocacy and policy work is difficult. A recent *Grantmakers in Health* report concluded that particular methods, metrics, and tools to measure the effectiveness of advocacy and policy do not exist, but provide a framework for doing such an evaluation. According to the Alliance for Justice, some foundations have avoided funding advocacy and policy work because of this lack of metrics and methods. The Alliance for Justice's previously mentioned guide stresses nontraditional evaluation methods and mutual agreement among funding agencies and grantees around goals and objectives.

Among the evaluations read by the consultant team, the Semics, LLC evaluations of the Community Developed Initiatives were the only ones that included policy and advocacy. These evaluations included some of the best practices of evaluation, as outlined by the external literature. There was a focus on creating a theory of change to drive the evaluation (though it's not clear if the theory of change was present in driving the initiative); a spotlight on understanding the grantee contributions and not attribution; and, at least in the Small Grants Program, an effort to build the capacity of providers to use data to conduct self and community evaluation. (*CDI Large Grants Evaluation, 2005 and 2006*, and *CDI Small Grants Evaluation, 2006*)

Additional Considerations

The value and potential gains of advocacy and policy endeavors are clear from the literature. However, the complicated terrain of funding and the relative fit of advocacy and policy within traditional approaches to funding particular programs contribute to a range of thoughts on what can or should be pursued. For example, as advocacy does not neatly fit into specific time frames, it is difficult to design straightforward funding strategies with likely and predictable indicators of success.

Gaps in Literature

While the literature is comprehensive in the aggregate, the consulting team did notice some gaps that would require further exploration in future writings, including:

- Apparent overlap of capacity building and policy and advocacy so as to better understand their intersection. This understanding will help to support grantee needs to build stronger policy and advocacy efforts and increase First 5 LA understanding of how best to support these efforts.

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- Opportunities in Los Angeles County regarding policy in First 5 LA's RGF five priority areas: supporting parents and caregivers, nutrition, physical activity, oral health and injury prevention.
 - Comprehend how other foundations are thinking about and/or implementing evaluations so that data and outcomes may be more quantifiably measured, and how organizations can demonstrate links between short and long-term outcomes of their work.
 - Track how organizations that are doing policy and advocacy work define and pursue "sustainability" of efforts, outcomes and impact

As in capacity building, these issues were further explored in interviews with grantees, capacity building providers and other foundations.

III. INTERVIEWS

Methodology

In order to complement and add to findings from the literature review, the consulting team conducted interviews with a diverse array of stakeholders that either support (as a funder or consultant) or are organizations that focus on children zero to five years old or that work in the priority funding areas. First 5 LA's target populat. In all, the team interviewed over 35 individuals from over 30 organizations, which represented current and former First 5 LA grantees, local and national foundations, as well as capacity building providers and policy experts. The average length of each interview was approximately one hour. The protocol for these interviews was developed based on findings from the literature review and subsequent conversations with First 5 LA about other desired knowledge. The protocols and questions for the interviews are described in more detail below.

Patterns and observations about best practices in capacity building, policy, and advocacy began to emerge as a result of the literature review; however, in order to gain a more complete picture of the landscape of these concepts in practice, it was essential to communicate with those who understand what was most needed at the local level and how best to enhance capacity building, advocacy, and relevant policies on the ground; grantees could provide us this view. It was also important to capture the experience of funding agencies that have already attempted to create successful capacity building, and policy and advocacy initiatives. All of this information would then help First 5 LA understand its new role and how best to craft it.

The consulting team crafted initial interview questions – a mix of unanswered items from the literature review as well as additional questions to more fully inform potential findings and recommendations. These questions were then vetted with First 5 LA staff in order to arrive at a final question set. (For a list of complete questions, please consult Appendix B – Interview Protocols.) The team then split up to gather the information. In general, the goals of the interviews were to find out more information about best practice regarding capacity building, advocacy and policy from the vantage point of grantees, providers of capacity building and foundations.

Purpose of Interviews

The goals for each interview group were as follows:

- Grantees (current or former) – Collect more information about the capacity building needs of grantees, assistance needed to build effective policy and

from the organizational perspective, and to understand what, if any, potential opportunities exist for policy and advocacy in the RGF priority areas.

- Capacity Building Providers -- Gather information about how Los Angeles organizations are provided support in capacity building and policy and advocacy. More specifically, the focus was to better understand the costs of capacity building and policy and advocacy, gain a better sense of the best practices and approaches to helping organizations develop, build and sustain policy and advocacy programs (including costs and duration.)
- Foundations - Local, state and national foundations were interviewed in order to gather more information about the best practices in capacity building and policy and advocacy; commitment to fund organizational work in capacity building and policy and advocacy; and to understand what foundations think are critical issues in policy and advocacy for children P-5 in Los Angeles and California.
- Policy experts - Develop more knowledge about the issues and approaches to policy and advocacy that will have the most leverage for First 5 LA.

Please note in some sections these interview highlights below do provide more information about best practices in policy and advocacy than in capacity building. This is for a couple of reasons: Given, First 5 LA's relative inexperience with policy and advocacy, staff asked the consulting team to focus on policy and advocacy as a priority; the literature review begged more questions about policy and advocacy than capacity building; and in general the team felt the challenge of funding policy and advocacy with a responsive grantmaking program required further, more in-depth exploration than organizational capacity building, which is comparatively more straight forward and better documented in the literature.

Interview Highlights

General

Overall, interviews corroborated findings from the literature review regarding best practices and implications for effective capacity building and policy and advocacy, for the three major groups interviewed: organizations, funders, and capacity building providers. However, the interviews added insights around the geographic area covered by First 5 LA . Generally, there is consensus (in the interviews across groups interviewed) that:

- long-term strategies for capacity building, and policy and advocacy work most effectively,
- there is a shortage of organizations with capacity to engage in policy and advocacy work, and organizations to support them,
- finding high quality capacity providers sometimes difficult, but critical
- peer –learning seen as beneficial to capacity building and policy and advocacy
- community interest and readiness for policy change is challenging.

Long-Term Approach

One best practice that was supported in the interviews is that capacity building and policy and advocacy are ongoing efforts. Capacity building efforts may have organizational impacts in periods of two to three years, yet organizational transformations based on those efforts take much longer periods to mature.

For policy and advocacy work, the time horizon is even greater. Doing this work effectively and having meaningful impact in policy and advocacy generally translates into a five-to-ten year commitment on any one particular effort, by both the funder and the grantee, understanding that funding should be in smaller, shorter spurts of two to three years. This shorter period enables organizations to adjust their strategies once the work begins and as changes occur in the policy arena. More importantly, the long-term provides more of an opportunity for organizations to build relationships and trust among each other (in a coalition where they may see each other as competitors, for example), with their funder, and with their constituencies.

Collaboration itself requires time, making it difficult for small groups to participate. In some cases this also means being able to develop infrastructure where needed in order to advance a strategy. The long-term also provides organizations the opportunity to focus on their proposed work without overwhelming attention to short term funding needs.

Needs for Capacity Building

Like in the literature review, capacity building organizations underscored the need for quality control with providers, the importance of mentorship or coaching as a tool for sustained organizational improvement and emphasized peer learning and convenings as ways to maximize delivery of capacity building services.

Needs for Policy and Advocacy

What also came across clearly from the four groups interviewed is that many organizations that do P-5 work within the Los Angeles County do not have the capacity to do policy and advocacy. The interviews also uncovered that there are not enough capacity building providers available to increase the organizational capacity to engage in policy and advocacy where needed, specifically in areas where there are high concentrations of people of color. There also seems to be a dearth of funding for policy and advocacy in Los Angeles that compounds this organizational shortage to either build capacity or do effective policy and advocacy work.

When organizations lack adequate funding, it is very difficult for them to possess the kinds of management and administrative capabilities required to support

program implementation. Absent of core organizational capacity, it is even more difficult to successfully pursue advocacy and policy strategies.

As noted in the literature review and reinforced in the interviews, organizations that have a mission that includes policy and advocacy, have staff dedicated to policy and advocacy, have staff with experience in policy and advocacy, and are generally larger in budget tend to be those most likely to engage in policy and advocacy work. This is not surprising given the costs associated with this level of infrastructure, which is beyond the scale and scope of most community based organizations.

Perceived Opportunities for First 5 LA

When discussing how First 5 LA can best impact the policy landscape of Los Angeles, several interviewees believed that First 5 LA has an opportunity to establish itself as a leader in policy in Los Angeles. Interviews suggested that First 5 LA can also establish a focused, yet flexible policy agenda.

More specifically, grantee organizations, foundation executives and policy experts identified several opportunities for First 5 LA in the five priority areas identified in the Open Grant Making Implementation Plan. More specific information regarding these recommendations is discussed in the sections below; there is also a list of some of these recommendations in Appendix G: Critical Opportunities for Prenatal to 5.

Peer Learning

Although many nonprofits engage in various sorts of collaboration or other learning opportunities they seldom have the time to take full advantage of the learning opportunities inherent in these situations. Peer learning provides a forum for the learning to take place.

Opportunities to learn from and with others was a recurring theme in the interviews, In fact, capacity building providers mentioned peer learning as the preferred method of choice among organizations, and evaluations often document peer learning as the approach which is most effective and has the most amount of long-term impact on organizations. The interviews also exposed the desire for more peer learning opportunities, such as those undertaken by First 5 LA in the Community Developed Initiatives Large Grants and in the Sustainability Project.

Organizations

Consulting team members interviewed eleven current and former grantees to collect more information about: capacity building, capacity building for policy and

advocacy, and local policy and advocacy about which First 5 LA should be aware.

Interviewees were very generous with their time, treating participation in this process as an opportunity. They view First 5 LA as a natural ally and an important partner. Former and current grantee profiles varied, including a range of:

- Budgets (from \$390K to \$34 Million)
- Positions (EDs to program director)
- Infrastructure and sophistication about capacity building and policy and advocacy. Most, for example had strategic plans, though only the minority had policy and advocacy goals and objectives in them; organizational structures to support capacity building, policy and advocacy work also varied, some having staffers solely devoted to this work (the majority did not).

In broad strokes, grantee organizations were very vocal in describing their capacity building needs for program and organizational sustainability and for policy and advocacy. They had a harder time identifying opportunities for First 5 LA in the priority areas. The three sections that follow articulate the responses in more detail.

Capacity Building Successes and Challenges

Sustainability was positioned as the key issue for organizations. Most noted these challenges as manifested in program and organizational sustainability.

Organizational leaders spoke frankly about their program sustainability concerns. While they are grateful for First 5 LA's for investments in their programs, they are experiencing (or have experienced) difficulty in replacing this source of funding. This is especially true of those projects where First 5 LA was the sole funder. Coalitions also face these sustainability issues as they often do not have plans describing how they will continue the programmatic work at the end of a funding period.

Grantee organizational leaders also noted that organization-wide financial sustainability was an issue to which they needed clearer answers and approaches. In order to do the kind of comprehensive, integrated work these agencies desire (mainly resulting from their experience doing First 5 LA programming), they need to create effective business models, mainly involving mission-based revenue generating activity (selling knowledge, through materials dissemination and consulting services), creative partnering and real estate revenues that may help to offset programs.

When asked to discuss ingredients of sustainability, organizational leaders pointed to the following characteristics of organizational effectiveness:

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- Clear mission
 - Viable financial model
 - Diversified funding streams
 - Effective governance and leadership
 - Well developed planning and budgeting mechanisms
 - Strong staff and staff development plan
 - Ability to take advantage of opportunities for growth and impact

Grantee organizations also added the following capacity building issues with which they would like assistance

- Assistance with developing and maintaining strong collaborations and collaborative partnerships
- Marketing and public relations to publicize good work, develop “brand” or organizational recognition beyond immediate stakeholders.
- Long range planning work needed by some of the smaller and mid range agencies.
- Capital infrastructure to provide services (this is an issue mainly for those with less than \$5 million budgets).
- Adequately trained staff and continuous staff training; this is true of all organizations. Staff retention also a critical concern.
- Information technology to do the work effectively.
- Models to build a learning community; learning organization as a viable model to create dynamism and durability.
- Time and commitment to funding capacity building on the part of funders; patient funding needed

When asked about potential solutions to the sustainability quandary, interviewees articulated the need for more effective fund development, especially relationship building with funding agencies, individual donors and community through targeted marketing. Grantee also expressed the desire to learn from others who have had success in creating program sustainability.

Capacity Building for Policy and Advocacy

When asked where they might need help in building capacity for policy and advocacy (information that was scant in both the internal and external literature to First 5 LA) one thing was made clear: understanding policy and advocacy in all its facets, not just the “legislative advocacy” and “lobbying”. In fact, many grantees mistook legislative advocacy and lobbying as interchangeable with policy and advocacy.

Therefore, it will be important to educate potential RGF grantees to what First 5 LA means by advocacy and policy. Several grantees acknowledged that an “Advocacy 101” training might be helpful to them and others that do not see policy and advocacy as core to its work.

It was also made clear, however, that some grantees are savvy about policy and advocacy and are already heavily engaged in this work. Those organizations that weaved policy and advocacy into their mission, into long range planning goals, and whose board and staff had previous policy and advocacy experience were the ones more likely to engage in this work and to understand why and how policy and advocacy contributes to their organization's viability and sustainability.

Grantees also identified very specific capacity building needs around policy and advocacy, including:

- Assistance needed in training organizations how to access funding agencies that support policy and advocacy.
- How to build strong, effective collaboratives that last beyond one issue or for longer than a grant... to get P&A project off the ground, takes planning, choosing partners wisely and developing those partnerships. Funding for this work in a 5 to 10 year venture, according to one grantee and patient funding is crucial to this work.
- Staff and board development work in this area also seen as critical. For some, it was also about building in more staff time for State level lobbying and advocacy that has the greatest possible impact at the local level.
- Constituency development is very important, particularly for those who have community-building mission and want to empower parents for advocacy, which included almost all grantees interviewed.
- Developing infrastructure (staffing, etc.) to support policy and advocacy brought up by the vast number of interviewed grantees.

Opportunities for First 5 LA in Funding Priorities Supporting Parents and Caregivers, Physical Health and Preventing Prevention

As several grantees pointed out, policy and advocacy work, much like capacity building, is linked, and is not a single issue. There is a need then to think about the integration of these issues. It is also important to treat policy and advocacy as integral to achieving long range goals. One grantee articulated it this way, "Policy needs to bridge the different systems and issues that affect children and families including poverty/economic impact, housing, childcare, child welfare, mental health etc."

Also, grantees noted that better qualified and trained staff is a policy concern for all of these priority areas. As credentialing and standards become more stringent, residentially-based care will be less available to parents (placing a greater onus on CBOs to do this work.).

Grantee leaders also stressed that policy and advocacy activities need to be culturally and language appropriate, especially if working to build constituent capacity or raise awareness about issues that may be taboo, such as mental health or limits regarding physical punishment of kids.

Specifically, grantees also developed a list of potential issues that First 5 LA might potentially engage. A complete list of these potential activities are documented in Appendix G. However, examples of these recommendations are listed below

- Supporting Parents and Caregivers
 - Particularly for those organizations working with monolingual, immigrant Latino families, it is important to develop a county wide approach to training families about their legal rights (esp. if undocumented); critical nature of preschool attendance for all kids.
 - Train parents/educators to detect and support children 0-5 who may have mild to moderate special needs.
 - Move debate re: standards and academic achievement away from test scores. Position this as an issue about engaging parents as child's first teacher and giving all parents the skills and resources to help kids learn and give them access to quality preschool. .
 - Pre-K \$600 million for LAUP will eventually run out, and should continue and align with P-3 priorities, since successful UP models touted are costly and rely on healthy families and kids that are ready to learn (and may not, if issues preventing learning are not dealt with before preK).
- Physical health
 - Universal screening for all children 0-5
 - Improve children's physical health through increased parent and teacher education and enthusiasm for outdoor learning
 - Campaign to link physical activity and nutrition; good physical health involves both, not just one.
- Injury Prevention
 - None given

Notes on Evaluation and Theory of Change

In addition to overall existing needs for developing evaluation capacity in organizations, there were some additional ways to think about the value, use, and process of evaluation. Often, strategies and activities that lead to the most desirable outcomes are not known. This means that there is some value when the outcomes are not necessarily those that the program aims to achieve. For capacity building, it is not clear what type of capacity building builds the organizational ability to do policy work, making it difficult to delineate effective strategies. This is especially challenging when groups are often inaccurate in evaluating their own technical assistance needs.

It was agreed that both the funding agency and grantees should agree on a theory of change. Within the theory, there should also be an articulation of assumptions that explains why the chosen strategies were likely to produce results. These assumptions should ideally be supported by research.

Capacity Building Providers and Policy Experts

The following information was gathered from 13 capacity building providers with various backgrounds and expertise -- including policy experts, capacity and technical assistance providers and service organization leaders who engage in policy and advocacy -- and reflects their perspectives of funders that support and organizations that need capacity building and policy and advocacy support. Questions asked of these individuals were in four basic categories, including: what it takes to effectively engage in policy and advocacy work, successful models and opportunities, the best methods to measure policy and advocacy, and what the major challenges are to policy and advocacy.

Much of the responses from capacity building providers reinforce the best practices about capacity building, and policy and advocacy. Respondents provided new data in some of the questions asked; highlights included the following.

Best Practices Reinforced

Respondents identified eight different methods that organizations can engage in public policy and advocacy work. They include:

1. Doing policy and advocacy work on your own.
2. Leading the field in some area of practice so that your program becomes the model that decision-makers know and prefer to fund.
3. Creating a collaboration or partnership (could also be called initiative) that works together to achieve a specific policy or advocacy outcome. Can also result in permanent changes in that organization may also become more collaborative in program and service work as well as policy work.
4. Being a member of a policy-based coalition or association that addresses their issues or concern. The association or coalition does the policy work for your organizations.
5. Building the capacity of clients to advocate for themselves or building capacity of parents so they can advocate for their children.
6. Gaining an appointment to a commission that is developing policy for a specific industry or geographic area.
7. Organizing communities, groups of individuals or groups of nonprofits into a joint or single political voice.
8. Engaging in advocacy in an invisible or quiet way every day but not calling it advocacy. (The organization may or may not know they are doing advocacy or policy work)

Interviewees highlighted best practices not mentioned in the literature regarding policy and advocacy. Of the information collected, the most striking included: having a compelling communication of what you want to achieve that is tied to your story and data; sponsoring legislation with others and having a plan for

accessing decision-makers and their staffs. It was jokingly mentioned by one interviewee that close attention should be made of where decision makers go to access them in more relaxed environments including chambers of commerce, clubs, and special events.

Understanding Capacity Building for Policy and Advocacy

Lack of evaluation, poor self-assessment and lack of information about where capacity building services can be found can work against organizations getting the training or expert support they need.

The main issue for nonprofits is that they do not know where resources can be found. Providers promote only what they offer which creates the sense among organizations that policy and advocacy training are not available (since organizational leaders often do not look beyond training and particular management support organizations that are local to them).

Lack of evaluation may be most serious problems because it is not objectively clear what type of capacity building builds individual or organizational ability to do effective policy and advocacy work; the “knowledge” we do have is purely anecdotal. Furthermore, since capacity building is no longer a “growth industry” to funding agencies, there is even less investment in evaluation. To compound this need for evaluation, organizations are often not good or even accurate when they evaluate their own technical assistance needs. Organizations can look very efficient and effective in one area and be weak in another. Identifying capacity needs is an important ability that should be strengthened.

Integrating Policy and Advocacy into the Organization

It is challenging for organizations to decide to incorporate policy and advocacy into their work where such activities were previously nonexistent. Including policy means a profound shift in structure, especially if an organization is service oriented. Fitting policy and advocacy into the larger frame and mission can be difficult when most organizations isolate their roles and programs. While *some* management support organizations are moving into providing policy training, this was generally not the case with providers interviewed.

The challenge for most groups may be that they do not possess the “belly” for the work. Moreover, even when organizations move forward with policy and advocacy agendas, they must determine how to integrate these efforts into other aspects of their work, which can be difficult. One of the service organization respondents said, “My board would find it difficult if advocacy became too visible.” Funding is also a critical issue, as funding agencies are often reluctant and afraid of policy work.

Policy work often requires collaboration. However, since many organizations see

themselves in competition with each other, it is hard to get nonprofits to work together. Collaboration also requires significant time in itself, which makes it difficult for groups to participate, particularly for those with only two or three staff members. As such, there must be a natural interest in policy and advocacy work among collaborators for it to work.

Costs of Policy and Advocacy

Interviewees also felt that it was too difficult to identify costs because so much of this analysis depends on the specific methods and outcomes the nonprofit used in its policy and advocacy work. Factors that might potentially influence costs, according to those experts interviewed, include:

- An organized, strong infrastructure and focused effort does seem to be necessary, this takes money and is dependent on the costs of those hired to do the work. Investment in staffing does seem to be necessary and for most groups may be the greatest cost
- Interviewees also mentioned that although it is rare, small nonprofits can make great policy changes if they have the passion to do it (many with free volunteer energy). A lot can be done with volunteer support but the time to manage volunteers needs to be considered as a cost; many times this is not the case.
- Long-term, systems change and social change usually means huge time and money costs to pull off in terms of activities engaged in. This is highly variable.

Management Support Organizations (MSO) and Role in Policy and Advocacy

Although most of the respondents felt that thoughtful management support organizations were moving into providing policy training, nonprofit investment in building their capacity to do policy and advocacy was mixed. Some comments offered included:

- Engaging in policy work requires major shift in organizational focus and infrastructure.
- Although few of the MSO organizations offer policy or advocacy training, when they do some replied in the following manner. “When we offer advocacy training, we can’t fill the seats” Yet, another MSO offered forum on critical policy issues, over 200 organizations participated.
- Service providers that also do policy work said most nonprofits actually do some level of policy work but may not call it that, and that others may even try to keep the work invisible since funders and board members are not supportive of policy work.
- A certain level of capacity is needed to do the policy work, but neither the literature review nor the interviews make it clear whether nonprofits will know what skills to enhance or will see the need to build such skills.
- What works best seems to be updates on critical policy issues while

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- workshops on lobbying and how to do policy work is of less interest to most nonprofits.
- Because capacity building depends on work to be done, cookie cutter approach is not effective.

Evaluation

Most of the management support organizations do not do evaluation beyond satisfaction surveys of their work. All respondents felt evaluation was important and the groups doing advocacy and service all had evaluation processes in place that did inform their work. Most of the respondents felt that First 5 LA could do evaluation in the short and long term by looking at benchmark achievement in the short term.

Only two of the respondents actually used a theory of change to guide their work. They all agreed, however, that a theory of change would be a useful guide and needed to be tied to a specific intervention the organization wanted to achieve. All agreed there is no cookie cutter model such as if you do this you will achieve these results. A theory of change should emphasize a specific outcome the organization wants to achieve.

The provider expert interviewees suggested that it was important for First 5 LA and grantees to agree on a theory of change. One respondent reminded us that a theory of change was not a “these are the ideal characteristics of this project” statement but rather a reflection of what it takes to bring about a long-term goal. Again the experts also commented that a theory of change could be either broad in scope or very detailed. Again they stressed that the change theory should be informed by the outcome the organization is trying to achieve.

Respondents felt that most organizations do not necessarily articulate a theory of change, but instead rely on a gut sense of steps to take. (Only four of the respondents actually had an articulated theory of change for their work, but some are working on it.) Policy experts and the one researcher provided the clearest outline of what a theory of change should include. The respondents felt a theory of change could be helpful for both First 5 LA and/or their grantees for guiding the advocacy effort but would be essential for a project that sought to achieve a social change.

Critical Opportunities for P-5 groups

Policy issues selected by First 5 LA, according to those interviewed, should both appeal to bi-partisan support and be issues that enjoy among policy leaders.

Potential opportunities according to respondents, included:

- Reducing unintended injuries to children and oral health (would garner bi-partisan support).
- Prioritizing oral health (seen to be an important and “sexy” priority). One

of the policy experts recommended that First 5 LA might want to look at the work done by the *Children's Dental Health In Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties: Overview of Current Needs and Activities*, by Catherine Crystal Foster, Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, January 2006.

- Impacting both the public and private arenas (in First 5 LA's priorities) to produce and increase the likelihood of meaningful change.

Using Peer Learning to Create Learning Organizations

As in the literature review, respondents suggested that peer learning programs or "learning communities" are emerging as the preferred way to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations. The way for First 5 LA to build learning organizations may be to provide opportunities for grantees to be part of "learning community." Many view the opportunity to learn from each other as one of the great advantages of being in the nonprofit sector.

Local and National Funders

The team interviewed local and national foundations to better understand foundations that funded capacity building, policy and advocacy. The consulting team asked various questions about these funding agencies' learning from their previous work, and wanted to uncover how those early lessons learned have influenced foundation staffs to craft their work in smarter, more productive ways.

The consultant team followed up initial interviews conducted by First 5 LA staff to local foundations -- such as The California Endowment, the California Community Foundation, United Way LA -- augmenting those conversations to include funders who are known for their roles as leaders in the child and family development sector -- such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Marguerite Casey Foundation -- and in policy and advocacy -- such as The Open Society Institute.

Generally, conversations surfaced information that complemented many of the best practices found in the literature review. The interviews also helped to categorize themes and trends that exemplify how foundations are integrating lessons from their previous work into current grantmaking and future program/initiative design. Some of the major trends included:

- articulating policy and advocacy goals early in a grantmaking program to achieve maximum impact
- focusing on mid-term (rather than long term) outcomes
- building organizational capacity by focusing on sustainability and policy and advocacy

Capacity Building

The various questions for grantmaking executives around what and how to fund capacity building, are connected to the fundamental and implicit questions asked in the literature review and analysis; that is, capacity building for what, for whom and for what impact? Although some questions specifically targeted capacity building efforts, funders tended to talk about these efforts in the context of their ultimate goal of impacting policy and advocacy. The following discussion contains their responses.

Variety of Delivery Methods to Building Capacity

Funding agencies use a variety of approaches to deliver capacity building support. These approaches are defined by grant making interests that focus funding on specific areas of capacity and to specific methods with which to build these predetermined capacity building areas.

The question of what to fund in order to build capacity can vary. However, funding agencies cited various organizational capacity building activities they supported. These include:

- Leadership development
- Executive Team building/ Staff development
- Strategic planning
- Data collection
- Evaluation
- Media Relations
- Fundraising

Organizational funding for capacity building is only one of these approaches. Two foundations cited building their internal capacity to provide capacity building technical assistance by contracting with consultants who served as extended foundation staff. Other foundations are looking to build the capacity of intermediary capacity building providers to work with their grantees. Lastly, other foundations have developed specific training programs for grantees administered by outside consultants/organizations with expertise.

Coaching and Peer Consultation Needed in Addition to Traditional Effectiveness Methods Needed

In addition to traditional capacity building/organizational effectiveness grants as identified above, funding agencies have identified the need for coaching and peer consultation as special capacity building strategies with longer term impact for grantees.

Investments in coaching and peer consultation help leaders of nonprofits think and act more strategically. Given the isolation of nonprofit leaders, coaching and peer consultation help organizational leaders become more reflective and take risks in an environment of learning and trust with an informed and

supportive outsider. The combination of funding coaching and peer consultation with traditional effectiveness methods also helps agencies to behave as learning organizations.

The Changing Face of Funding for Capacity Building

United Way of Greater Los Angeles estimates that \$9.2 billion is spent annually on health and human services in Los Angeles County. In comparison, they calculate that no one funding agency's limited resources can ever make a significant impact by supporting direct services alone. As a result, the United Way is focusing on building capacity for policy and advocacy work. The United Way is not the only funding agency taking this approach. Many foundations are beginning to understand that only through policy and advocacy change can many of the issues that direct service attempts to alleviate really be solved or minimized. In addition, they calculate that policy and advocacy are necessary and important steps to achieve sustainable impact of these efforts. The two points were reinforced in conversations with funders the consulting team interviewed.

When referring to sustainability most funding entities interviewed view sustainability as an organization's ability to cement long-term support for its programs or to expand the impact of its program. National foundations vary in approach to funding sustainability; some take more of a hands-on approach being very involved in helping its grantees to leverage other funding, while others carry out their support in broader ways. According to one grantmaker, longer-term commitments go hand in hand with ensuring sustainability. Extended grant periods can also be used as a strategy for creating long-term partnerships with grantees as mentioned by another interviewee. Additionally, funding sources are recognizing the need to develop long-term relationships with key grantees in the policy and advocacy arenas.

Evaluating Capacity Building

Recognizing the difficulty in measuring the direct relationship between capacity building and program level outcomes, funding agencies are tending to use an organizational effectiveness model for grantees to design programs and benchmark progress. That is, evaluations may look at measures accomplished in areas such as leadership development, strategic planning, fundraising, board development, governance structure and overall fiscal policies. As in the literature review, funding agencies indicated this can be staff intensive and requires some flexibility on the part of the funding agency to accommodate unexpected changes and setbacks such as the departure of an Executive Director.

Policy and Advocacy

Foundation staff interviewed identified trends for funding agencies interested in systems change, through policy and advocacy, and reinforced much of what is documented in the literature review. Foundation staff interviewed emphasized that success and impact is heavily reliant on a funding agency's long-term goals, with focused measurable objectives created before or early in the process of program implementation.

Based on lessons learned, the trend is for each funding agency to establish its own policy agenda and then strategically identify, develop and align a cadre of grantees toward achieving policy goals. They articulate their intended policy direction (sometimes a source of internal conflict in funding agencies) early in the process, defining their outcomes broadly enough to accommodate changes in the external environment. Although the goals are long-term, the outcomes are intermediate given the unpredictable nature of the policy arena

The ability to have impact in policy and advocacy is dependent on the ability of a funding agency to develop goals, align its internal resources behind those major goals and tactics, select grantees strategically, provide high engagement technical assistance to grantees, and partner with other funding agencies to leverage resources – both capital and human.

What is also clear from these interviews is that policy and advocacy takes time, and usually requires 5-10 years to bring about systems-wide impacts, especially at the large scale of a county such as Los Angeles. Partnering among grantees and the funding of networks was another key strategy identified in creating change. Only through networks and coalitions could significant change occur as single organizations alone neither have the weight nor the person power to elicit systems change.

Traditional evaluation approaches are generally insufficient in assessing systems change and the contributions of policy and advocacy endeavors. Interviews from funding agencies generally agree that beginning with a theory of change enhances evaluative approaches. Additionally, case studies, according to interviews, are essential to any viable and comprehensive evaluation of funding for policy and advocacy.

The following are points that the foundation interviewees stressed.

Further Thoughts on Evaluation

- *Foundation Level* -- Whether deemed “theory of change” or not, both national and local foundation executives discussed overall strategies for effecting policy change through a variety of tools at their disposal. Locally, foundations seem to be working toward more organizational coherence

towards policy change: leveraging influence of foundation leadership, internal policy/public affairs departments, foundations' media relations, data collection and dissemination and grantmaking -- aligning foundation resources behind a smaller number of policy goals. According to local foundation staff, theories of change should include conceptualizing both grantees and foundations as learning organizations.

- Grant Level -- Grantees and funding agencies should spend time up front attaining clarity on the intentions and approaches of funding.

Policy and Advocacy is Challenging for Responsive Grantmaking

Responsive grantmaking, although important and critical as a strategy in a funding agency's tool chest, is regarded by many funding agencies as scattershot and difficult to measure in evaluating aggregate results. Foundation executives interviewed reinforced the ideas that in supporting policy and advocacy, it is more important to err on the side of being too strategic, rather than in being too responsive, especially where impact is a consideration.

Funding Agencies Use a Variety of Strategies to Fund Policy and Advocacy

In interviews with funders, they identified the types of policy and advocacy grants that have worked best in their experience. These funding mechanisms included:

- research and data collection and dissemination
- constituency building
- public education
- community mobilization
- coalition building
- media/public relations
- regulatory and legislative advocacy
- and impact litigation.

There is also a current trend to fund general operating support grants (due to legal issues around foundations funding lobbying.) Although this may be a viable way for some foundations to eliminate the risk of supporting lobbying, this approach is creating new challenges to evaluation since it is difficult to attribute specific activities and impact to general funding.

Grantee Selection

Foundations look to develop portfolios of grantees tackling different aspects of policy work. i.e. direct service grantees with access to data and constituencies, community based organizations that have credibility with elected officials/decision makers, policy research grantees with strong advocacy skills and/or content expertise.

In utilizing a hands-on approach, some funding agencies are able to customize the activities and strategies of their grantees, more intricately identifying grantee ability based on previous experiences with them. In these customized approaches, more developed organizations do not necessarily have an advantage over those that are at earlier stages in their life cycles. For policy and advocacy, a newer organization may have a higher learning curve, but an older organization may have more political clout. A smaller community-based organization might have closer ties to intended beneficiaries of certain changes, enhancing the authenticity of policy proposals and constituency-building. The issue is less one of experience and more of potential ability to affect and impact a policy issue.

Use of both internal and external application reviewers are also ways to identify potentially good grantees that might be overlooked—look for a. alignment of policy work with mission of organization b. policy goals realistic & knowledgeable c. sound program design i.e. theory of change or logic model d. organizational capacity—leadership, staffing etc

Supporting Peer Networks

Some funders formally utilize peer network strategies as a part of their policy and advocacy work. For example, the Open Society Institute (OSI) treats clusters of grantees as cohesive fields, helping groups define policy agendas. It requires collective buy-in and grantees viewing policy as a long term strategy, relying on intermediaries. Intermediaries act as advocacy coaches and help these organizations identify their respective strengths.

Funding Can Use Internal Leveraging

At many funding agencies, individual programs exist within firm boundaries. Given the comprehensive nature of social problems, integrated funding strategies and shared learning across programs can lead to greater results in communities. In order to transcend historic “silo-funding”, United Way is developing performance measures for staff to provide incentives to leverage each other’s work.

Open Society Institute (OSI)

For OSI, grantmaking in this area is cross cutting. They sometimes give groups funding to hire their own intermediaries. They previously had a “technical assistance fund” with about \$1 million per year to augment existing funding. OSI builds wide networks of organizations at various capacity levels, addressing particular priority issue areas. The varied organizations bring different strengths. A newer organization may have a higher learning curve; an older organization may have more political clout. It is also important to be able to identify key leadership and understand how to develop it.

A Remaining Challenge: OSI wants these networks to last and fund these efforts for the long haul. Spending down is a challenge, along with “flagship” issues.

Reflections on Research

The literature review and interviews provided the consulting team a substantial range of ideas to synthesize in order to advise the approach of the Responsive Giving Fund. The following section captures the consulting team's findings and recommendations, which attempt to help First 5 LA incorporate best practices into its efforts, but in a manner that would be appropriate to the unique circumstances of a County funding agencies with numerous stakeholders and lines of accountability.

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

As trends in funding demonstrate higher engagement between funding agencies and grantees, more focused goals and objectives for funding initiatives, and more clear desired results and methods for measuring progress, what is the appropriate role for the Responsive Giving Fund? The RGF is only one aspect of First 5 LA, but one that can enhance existing and future initiatives and improve the lives of children prenatal to 5 and their families.

In pondering how to extract useful lessons from extensive research, the consulting team sought to provide recommendations that borrow from trends in capacity building, policy, and advocacy, but apply to First 5 LA's unique circumstances. For example, the lines of accountability for all funding agencies are not the same; in the case of First 5 LA, the interests of a variety of stakeholders must be satisfied, including those of the Board of Commissioners. The consulting team wanted to be certain to be sensitive to these realities, arriving at recommendations that are realistic and achievable.

This section highlights some of the key findings that surfaced in the consulting team's research, and indicates how they could be manifested in a way that is instructive to the direction of the Responsive Giving Fund. The second part of this section provides somewhat of a roadmap that can guide the development of an RGF that can strengthen grantees and their collective capacity to influence policy and engage in advocacy.

The research and dialogue that led to these findings and recommendations began with the spirit in which the consulting team believes First 5 LA can enhance its value to its constituents – learning. Throughout the creation and implementation of the RGF, the consulting team stresses the importance of continuous learning to adapt and improve. First 5 LA made an important step in engaging the consulting team to catalyze an emerging learning tradition for First 5 LA – one which effectively incorporates knowledge gleaned from trends in the field, trial and error, and local experiences. In other words, the consulting team recommends that First 5 LA design a strategy with particular goals and expectations, while strengthening internal mechanisms enabling learning and adapting. For example, if intended objectives or outcomes do not materialize as planned, what will be First 5 LA's capacity to shift gears and constrict a new, more viable path? Learning and adapting is a capacity in itself. While First 5 LA clearly employs a learning approach already, the consulting team believes the following recommendations can only enhance its ability to learn, adapt, and grow.

Key Findings and Implications

Key Finding - General

Capacity, Advocacy and Policy Interrelated

The Responsive Giving Fund treats capacity building on the one hand, and policy and advocacy on the other, as two distinct funding strategies. However, research indicates a strong correlation between these activities. There is a need to build capacity of organizations, networks and coalitions to conduct the advocacy work needed to impact policy. (And thereby effect change in desired outcomes for children prenatal to 5 and their families.)

Implications for First 5 LA

While these funding strategies can certainly continue to be viewed by the Commission as somewhat separate and distinct funding activities, many of the findings and subsequent recommendations apply to both capacity building, and policy and advocacy across the board. Therefore, the Commission may consider funding capacity building or policy and advocacy or both.

Key Finding - Contextual

Responsive Giving Fund Uniquely Positioned

The RGF is being launched at an interesting time in First 5 LA's history. (See Figure 1, page 12) The fund is being launched by the Commission after having the chance to learn from its prior experience with responsive grantmaking in the Community Development Initiative. It is the first time an initiative will focus so intently on capacity building, policy and advocacy, yet two large initiatives are underway or on their way to be launched which have capacity building, policy and advocacy components within them. (Prenatal-3, Cross-Cutting Approaches,.) In addition, First 5 LA's newly established policy department is developing an agency-wide policy agenda, which is scheduled to go to the Board of Commissioners for approval shortly. And finally, planning for the next five year strategic planning process is practically underway.

Implications for First 5 LA

If seen in isolation, the RGF could get lost amongst the many larger upcoming initiatives and activities or become fragmented and thus not optimally impactful as a fund. However, if viewed as a stepping stone between the past and future

work funding capacity building and policy and advocacy, this fund can play a critical role in First 5 LA's future.

Key Findings - Responsive Grantmaking

While the consulting team did not explicitly research best practices in responsive grantmaking, some lessons learned from First 5 LA's experience with the Community Developed Initiative as well gleaned from interviews with other funders indicate both challenges and opportunities for these types of funds.

- Responsive grantmaking provides:
 - Opportunities for the community to try new ideas, models and approaches
 - Opportunities for the funder to experiment with new models, take risks with individual projects and learn from community generated ideas;

However,

- It is difficult if not impossible to measure the aggregate impact of these types of investments
- More defined outcomes can help steer grants in common direction and more readily allow for uniform data collection and sharing among grantees.
- Case study and cluster evaluation can be useful tools to mitigate, in part, the difficulty in assessing these funds.
- Clear, candid two-way communication in application guidelines and process can be critical to success (easily accessible language and cultural sensitivity are important considerations)

Implications for First 5 LA

There is an inherent tension between the desire to focus the work of grantees in order to maximize impact on clear measurable outcomes and the spirit of community innovation at the core of open grantmaking. Balancing these somewhat competing interests is especially challenging to the Commission given multiple stakeholder interests and expectations legal reporting requirements and the fundamental nature of the organizations public accountability.

Key Findings - Capacity Building

- Capacity building investments can be categorized as: improving programs, strengthening operations and enhancing the ability of organizations to conduct policy and advocacy work.

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- Capacity building can be provided in various ways including one-on-one, trainings or peer to peer and can be provided directly by the funder or via intermediaries or consultants.
 - The quality of the agency or individual (the capacity builder) providing technical support, training and ongoing support to the grantee is paramount to success.
 - There is a shortage of information about and access to quality capacity building support (TA providers and management support organizations) in Los Angeles.
 - Peer learning environments are cost effective, highly desirable and rewarding for grantees and provide additional benefits to funding agencies. There is a particular need for coaching and mentoring among organizations serving P-5 populations in Los Angeles County.
 - Candid communication and trust between funding agencies and grantees are critical. Grantees should feel safe to express needs and limitations to their funders.
 - Learning organization approach for both grantee and funding agency is optimum. Flexibility with circumstances such as unexpected changes in leadership important to success. Being able to extract learning and adapt to grow and improve is essential in the art of learning.
 - There is a need for financial sustainability of organizations after First 5 LA funding.
 - Evaluating capacity building is difficult, and the research is short on best practices and models. In general an organizational effectiveness approach is seen as most useful. See Self assessment tools such as the Alliance for Justice “Build Your Advocacy Grantmaking” document can be useful to set measurable benchmarks for grantee development and funder investment.

Implications for First 5 LA

Capacity building is generally considered a “high engagement” investment. Given limited administrative resources, First 5 LA will need to look for ways to build both internal and external capabilities to provide quality capacity building services to the grantees.

Key Findings - Policy and Advocacy

- Policy and advocacy investments are generally viewed by research and the philanthropic field as most effective when funding agencies leverage internal and external resources to maximize results through the:
 - Establishment of clearly defined policy goals, strategy and tactics before the policy and advocacy work begins;
 - Alignment of internal departments and funding streams based on early, well researched and established policy goals and strategies; and,
 - Development of partnerships with grantees and other stakeholders to pursue common, agreed-upon goals over 5-10 years, allowing for mid-course corrections as needed.
- Policy work is generally achieved through networks of organizations not individual organizations.
- Types of policy and advocacy support include: data collection, research, needs assessment, coalition building, media training etc
- Grantees and other local funding agencies welcome and encourage First 5 LA taking leadership role in policy and advocacy work on behalf of children P-5 and their families.
- There may be a shortage of well-developed organizations and coalition “ready” to do the policy and advocacy work on behalf of First 5 LA’s target populations and priority funding areas. The readiness issue may be particularly problematic in high need target geographic communities.
- Policy and advocacy grants are best designed and evaluated with a Theory of Change model, including a learning component. Given the fluid and unpredictable nature of this kind of work, it is preferable to measure intermediate outcomes and benchmarks as well as supplement traditional evaluation with case studies and lessons learned.

Implications for First 5 LA

To maximize impact on parents and caregivers, physical health and preventing unintentional injury, First 5 LA will need to explore ways to leverage internal and external resources, building both the internal and external capacity/readiness to effectively engage in policy and advocacy work on behalf of children P-5 and their families in the long run. It is evident much of this work has already begun internally.

Key Findings - Both Capacity Building and Policy and Advocacy

Grantee Selection:

- In selecting grantees, foundations primarily rely on the knowledge, experience and judgment of staff, management and outside experts to assess viability of proposals. Grantee selection functions best when there is sufficient professional experience applied to analyzing potential grantees and their programs. Most funders find selection criteria alone important as a guiding framework but not a viable replacement for case-by-case intellectual proposal/grantee assessment.

Implications for First 5 LA

First 5 LA's practice of using standardized review criteria for this fund along with staff's relative newness to funding policy and advocacy and to lesser degree capacity building may pose some challenges in grantee selection. Customizing selection criteria and process to account for more nuanced aspects these types of strategies and programs will be important.

Grantee Learning:

- Both capacity building and policy and advocacy efforts are most effective when grantees are encouraged to learn from their experiences, as well as from experts and other practitioners. Lessons learned are utilized by organizations and coalitions to continually adapt their internal and/or external strategies accordingly.

Implications

Effective learning organizations take informed risks and are willing to admit failure, a concept known as "safe failing." "Safe failing" implies a recognition that no matter how thorough and strategic a planning effort may be, external factors can influence the ability of the strategy to be implemented as designed. Being honest about setbacks lead to mid-course corrections and adapting goals, tactics and timetables to what is actually achievable. For example, the unexpected departure of a key staff person could delay outcomes related to capacity building or budget deficits could affect obtainment of policy goals, which were previously seen within reach. This poses challenges for First 5 LA given its understandable need to be accountable to the public for its expenditures and the results of those expenditures in terms of outcomes for children and their families.

Ongoing Support Needed--Funder as Capacity Builder:

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- Capacity building and policy and advocacy grants are most effective when funders provide ongoing technical assistance (TA) to grantees.
 - Technical assistance can be provided in multiple ways: TA can be provided directly by staff, via intermediaries or consultants or in partnerships with other funding agencies or capacity building providers.
 - Convening grantees is often seen as a cost effective way to deliver technical assistance and yields additional benefits as well.
 - Technical support provided for capacity building, policy and advocacy grants include various forms of training, information sharing, peer learning and in some cases mentoring and/or coaching. For policy and advocacy grantees, funder driven technical assistance often includes working with grantee or group of grantees to develop clear theories of change and strategy for policy work.

Implications for First 5 LA

The need to provide intensive support to capacity building, and policy and advocacy grantees in order to achieve the best results poses particular challenges to First 5 LA as a quasi-governmental agency with both legal and perceived restraints to expanding administrative staff. To maximize impact, First 5 LA should consider when to “build” internal capacity to provide ongoing support and when to “buy” support through other agencies, individuals or partners.

Funder As Learner:

- Grantmaking is most effective when both grantees and funders are willing to adapt, reflect, regroup and redirect efforts to continually improve effectiveness of both parties. This requires commitment on part of funder to engage with grantees in different ways.
- Overall, the effectiveness of funding agencies improves when staff and management improve their knowledge and skills via learning from grantees, one another and other funding agencies through formal and informal exchanges of lessons learned in the practice of grantmaking.

Implications for First 5 LA

Given myriad of demands on staff to design, implement and evaluate multiple investments and activities, taking time to learn and reflect from First 5 LA investments and lessons from others can seem desirable but unrealistic in practical terms.

The Challenge of Evaluation:

- The field of knowledge about effective evaluation of capacity building and policy and advocacy is new and evolving. In both cases, demonstrating measurable impact on desired program outcomes is difficult, especially in the short term.
- Both types of grants benefit from evaluation that build continual learning into the evaluation design and include opportunities to document learning about success, setbacks and mid-course corrections.

Implications for First 5 LA

The placement of these two hard-to-evaluate funding strategies within a short-term responsive grantmaking approach which is also inherently difficult to evaluate creates a particularly daunting evaluation challenge.

Clearly articulating theories of change for capacity building, policy and advocacy with agreement on expected outcomes during grant periods ensures the right data collection and manages expectations of all parties and stakeholders including the Board of Commissioners. In particular, this means getting clear about the long term outcomes within each priority area and identifying those intermediate benchmarks or outcomes which will be measured during the time period of the grant. Making allowances to collect and report unanticipated outcomes is also advisable.

Summary

In reviewing the findings and implications, the consulting team asked s: How can First 5 LA make the highest and most effective use of this fund given (A) the organization's relatively limited funding experience of policy and advocacy in particular (B) the challenge of funding long-term strategies in a relatively short-term responsive grantmaking program (C) RGF's placement within First 5 LA's current and anticipated initiatives and planning processes and (D) the internal resources available to First 5 LA to implement the program effectively?

The Consulting Team found many key best practices in funding already in play or in development at First 5 LA including: strong and engaged leadership, intelligent, curious highly engaged staff, teams working cross-departmental; a policy department with policy agenda on the way, culture of learning. In essence collective staff knowledge, is the Commission's biggest resource.

Recommendations

I. OVERARCHING

Recommendation: Position the Responsive Giving Fund as a Bridge Fund between past and future funding, as well as between and across funding initiatives and departments.

Use the Responsive Giving Fund to build the capacity of organizations and coalitions to do future work under P-3, Cross-Cutting Approaches and other programs of importance to First 5 LA now and going forward under the next Strategic Plan.

Consider the RGF grant-making cycles and length of funding to optimally “roll-over” strategically positioned and successful grantees into other initiatives and continue promising work under the next Strategic Plan.

Utilize RGF as a testing ground for small organizations with potential to accomplish good work and to position them to carry out work on a larger initiative. This approach would include funding: capacity building for organizations playing critical roles in First 5 LA’s service network, capacity building (TA) providers and policy and advocacy grantees. This may also include funding critically positioned direct service providers to make the shift to including policy and advocacy work as part of their mission and activities.

II. GRANTMAKING

Phased Approach

Recommendation: Use a phased approach to implementing RGF, considering the first round of grants as a learning phase.

- Use the first cycle of grants to:
 - Assess viability of LOI-Proposal process
 - Further define agency policy priorities and program outcomes
 - Establish a subset of grantees as a policy network (see recommendation)

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- After first cycle further refine application guidelines and process for future grant cycles as appropriate.

Policy Network

Recommendation: Establish a subset of grantees as a “policy network” to provide peer learning and networking and help develop and implement RGF policy goals and strategies.

- Select a group of grantees (as one would choose fellows to become a part of a cohort) to work together on policy and advocacy and engage in peer learning and collective capacity building.
- This policy network could be established within the RGF or across initiatives.

Grantee Selection

Recommendation: Utilize internal and external expertise to select a grantee cohort best suited to fill critical service gaps as well as build the foundation for future First 5 LA work on behalf of prenatal to five and their families.

Focus on funding organizations best positioned to build capacity for programmatic or policy and advocacy work to impact funding priorities.

Use internal and external reviewers with policy and advocacy experience as well expertise in priority areas to assist planning and development staff select policy and advocacy grantees.

Use internal and external reviewers with organizational development expertise to assist planning and development staff select capacity building grantees.

Incorporate additional expertise in funding priority areas or target communities would be a plus for both capacity building and policy and advocacy grantee selection.

Recommendation: Use Bridge Fund concept to further refine grantee selection with eye toward the future.

Consider prioritizing scoring for organizations that have the potential to fill an important need or gap in serving First 5 LA’s population or in achieving its policy goals related to the funding priorities.

Consider making allowances in scoring for programs that will align with concurrent or future initiatives such as P-3 or Cross-Cutting Approaches.

Look for opportunities in RGF to fund essential “front end” policy and advocacy activities, such as data collection and research, needs assessments, asset mapping and coalition building.

Evaluation

Recommendation: Combine the use of a learning and case study approach to evaluate overall fund effectiveness with more customized evaluation approach to individual grants and cluster evaluations.

For capacity building grants consider an evaluation model focused on organizational effectiveness in program, operations and or policy and advocacy. (See Appendix C)

For policy and advocacy grants build time into grantmaking process to work with individual grantees to develop/refine individual program theory of change/logic model.

Given long term and unpredictable nature of policy and advocacy work, stay focused on long-term (5-10 year) goals, yet be flexible with substantive, intermediate benchmarks or outcomes.

Evaluate grantees pursuing similar outcomes in a “cluster evaluation” to enhance peer learning and identify commonalities.

Conduct and distribute case studies that reveal lessons learned, communicate success and failure, educate decision makers, inform current work and place First 5 LA in strategic position for future policy and advocacy work.

Where possible use common evaluation process that can include unique features of each program so that results can be compared and contrasted for informing future grantmaking in capacity building and in policy and advocacy.

III. ONGOING SUPPORT

Convening Grantees

Recommendation: Use First 5 LA’s ability to convene grantees with the RGF to maximize impact of investments.

Create grantee learning community by providing:

- Technical assistance from staff and experts
- Training in Advocacy “101,” Media Relations and Evaluation
- Updates/Briefings on Legislation/Regulations related to First 5 LA policy goals and goals established by grantees
- Peer Learning
- Coaching and Mentoring Opportunities
- Planning and Strategy Development
- Evaluation Training and Support

Capacity Building Infrastructure

Recommendation: Invest in capacity building infrastructure necessary to help First 5 LA grantees develop programmatic organizational capacity and policy and advocacy capacity to achieve desired long term outcomes in supporting parents and care givers, physical health and preventing unintentional injuries.

Assess capacity building infrastructure needs to support ongoing work and invest in infrastructure development where gaps are identified.

Amplify range of grants in capacity building, policy and advocacy to include (management support) organizations that can provide technical assistance to core grantees.

Build grantees’ organizational capacity to become sustainable by helping them develop basic attributes of successful organizations, including having a clear mission, a viable financial model, a diversified funding stream, well developed planning mechanisms, strong staff and a solid staff development plan, and flexibility and dexterity to take advantage of outside opportunities for organizational growth and impact.

Consider funding executive coaches for non-profit managers in organizations critical to First 5 LA’s success in the long run.

IV. LEVERAGING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RESOURCES

First 5 LA as Learning Organization

Recommendation: Increase First 5 LA’s organizational effectiveness by creating opportunities for staff, management and board to learn from the work it supports, from each other and from experts and practitioners in the field.

Create mechanisms for the Commission staff to learn from community driven ideas brought forth in the RGF to inform the Commission's concurrent and future work including building staff knowledge around policy and advocacy as well as capacity building.

- Maximize use of grantee convenings for staff learning
- Include staff from other departments in proposal review

Create mechanisms for staff to learn from one another such as establishing periodic (every 6 months) cross-departmental debriefings of lessons learned through the RGF.

Consider presentation to the Board of Commissioners by outside experts regarding challenges of evaluating short-term impact of policy and advocacy work and the need to stay with the work for the long run, allowing for mid-course corrections and "safe failing."

Seek other opportunities for Board and Staff education possibly including grantee presentations of lessons learned from the field.

Leveraging Across Initiatives

Recommendation: Use RGF as an opportunity to bridge the Commission's investments.

Convene grantees across initiatives to strategize and coordinate policy agendas with First 5 LA as well as learn from each other regarding capacity building.

Explore ways to transition promising RGF grantees into other ongoing initiatives such as P-3 and the Cross-Cutting Approaches.

Recommendation: When long term policy goals for First 5 LA are adopted by the Board of Commissioners, seek ways to align grantmaking and auxiliary Commission resources behind those goals.

Communicate the Commission's policy goals broadly both internally and externally. Grantees and potential grantees will follow Commission's leadership.

Make grants to support Commission policy goals across funding streams and initiatives, including RGF where possible.

Further explore how First 5 LA's unique ability to lobby for legislation on behalf of children prenatal to five and their families can work in tandem

with the advocacy and policy work of grantees within the RGF and in other initiatives.

Partnering with Other Funding Agencies

Recommendation: Leverage RGF investment by partnering with other funding agencies on program investments, training, advocacy and policy activities of shared interest.

Develop deliberate approach to pursuing strategic partnership opportunities with local funders and consider dedicating staff toward that effort.

Consider partnering with other funders to provide technical assistance and training to grantees working on similar issues, populations or in same communities. (i.e. evaluation methods, media relations, etc.)

Consider convening other funders to brief them on policy issues important to your target population and share lessons learned from your investments.

V. OTHER OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Grantee Selection

- Begin with questions proposed in the Open Grantmaking Implementation Plan. The majority of questions regarding grantee selection fell into three major categories: (1) General fit of organizational mission and proposed program to the priorities of First 5 LA and the Responsive Giving Fund; (2) Ability of the applicant organization to accomplish the task proposed, as evidenced by past performance and track record; and, (3) Niche and strategic positioning of applicant organization, especially to accomplish policy and advocacy work.
- Consider life cycle issues of grantees in select process, especially though not exclusively in capacity building grants.
- Consider using the additional following general criteria for all organizations applying to the Responsive Giving Fund, and especially for those seeking capacity building assistance.
 - Strong and effective leadership and governance. This is mainly achieved by an organizations ability to have a strong, diverse board of directors that has a proven ability to set and implement policies, plan, evaluate the executive director and fundraise.

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- Sound program and evaluation design. A strong rationale should exist for programs and their design. In addition, an organization should have experience in evaluation of its programs.
 - Potential to support future work of First 5 LA. This is particularly critical in filling important needs and gaps for services or policy and advocacy.
 - Cultural diverse in board and staff, and culturally competent to meet the needs of its clients
 - Community credibility as viable institution that people have confidence in (for services or for policy and advocacy leadership)
 - Able to sustain programs so that First 5 LA is not entirely funding a program budget. Articulation of a sustainability plan would also be an important criteria.
- For policy and advocacy grants, consider the following additional characteristics:
 - Policy and advocacy are central to the organization and part of its mission
 - Staff and board have previous policy experience
 - Organizational networks and partnership are in place
 - Understands and has access to constituents
 - Collects critical data and knows how to analyze policy
 - Agency has potential to be a “go to” source for policy makers

Communications

- Conduct outreach meetings in target geographic regions to encourage small organizations or coalitions to apply.
- Use grantee friendly language, including target languages where appropriate
- Consider a program name change. Responsive Giving is not accurate description of the fund and may be confusing to applicants,
- Consider condensing 5 priority funding areas (supporting parents and caregivers, good nutrition, physical activity, oral health and prevention to 3 priority areas: supporting parents and caregivers, physical health and prevention of unintentional injuries.

Duration/Cost

- Make policy and advocacy grants in 2-3 year increments, allowing for renewal under future cycle or different program.
- Capacity Building grants should be no more than 2-3 years but may be less depending on activity.

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- Grant dollar amounts will need to be cut proportionately to fit the new increments. Example: Instead of a maximum policy grant of \$500,000 over five years, the new grant amounts should be \$100,000 per year not to exceed three years.

Conclusion

The consulting team's primary challenge was to provide recommendations that can simultaneously emphasize clarity and strategy towards achieving outcomes within priority areas, yet still remain somewhat open and responsive. The idea of combining a policy and advocacy strategy around a particular set of issues facing vulnerable children and their families with ongoing feedback pipelines with particular grantees and informed advisers is one multi-layered approach to achieving a variety of aims at once.

These recommendations are grounded in current trends, best practices, and informed perceptions in local and national fields. The consulting team extracted substantial information and insights from literature and interviews; through extensive communication, the consulting team vetted findings through their own vast experiences and collective analysis. In the end, various exchanges between the consulting team and First 5 LA staff contributed to customized recommendations that are respectful of the parameters (opportunities and limitations) of First 5 LA, the Commission, and the Responsive Giving Fund.

The consulting team hopes that the contents of this report can be instructive in extending the potential impact of First 5's efforts on Los Angeles children and families, the organizations that serve them, and the policies that shape their futures.

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- P-3 Framework
- P-3 Logic Model
- Organizational Chart
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- Policy Department Presentation: Grant Renewal Workshop 3/13/07
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 - Partnership for Families (PFF)
 - Healthy Births – Best Babies Collaborative Planning
 - Early Developmental Screening and Intervention (EDSI)
 - Family Literacy
 - Workforce Development
 - Community Developed Initiatives Large Grants
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- Responsive Giving Fund RFQ

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VI. APPENDICES

***Appendices C-K contain information also generated from the literature review and from the consultants' experience (where noted)**

Appendix A: Interviewees

The following is a list of individuals interviewed for this paper.

Capacity Building Providers

Thomas E. Backer, President, Human Interaction Research Institute
Jeanne Bell, Executive Director, CompassPoint San Francisco
Regina Birdsell, Executive Director, Center for Nonprofit Management
Patricia Bowie, Private Consultant
Linda Fowells, Vice President of Programs and Public Affairs, Community Partners
Judy Ross, Executive Director, Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership
Gerald R. Solomon, President & CEO, Public Health Foundation Enterprises, Inc.
Paul Vandeventer, President and CEO, Community Partners

Current or Former Grantees

Tina Allen, Director of the Children's Program, The Heart Touch Project
Leonora Barron, Executive Director, North Valley Caring Services
Elena Brewer, Co-Director, The Help Group
Richard Cohen, Executive Director, Westside Children's Center
Eric Nelson, Director of Special Projects, Child Educational Center
Rosie Ramos, PASITOS Director, Human Services Association
Holly Reynolds, Director of Children's Services, Child Development Center at Fairplex
Leticia Rosado, Family Services Director, Human Services Association
Arielle Rosen, Manager in Family Services Program, Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center
Barbara Stroud, Director of Early Intervention & Community Wellness, Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic
Elvia Torres, Associate Director, SPIRITT Family Services

Foundations

Cory Anderson, Annie E. Casey Foundation
Celeste Lacy Davis, Funding Exchange
Charles Fields, Marguerite Casey Foundation
Astrid Hendricks, Evaluation Director, The California Endowment
Alicia Lara, VP Programs, United Way LA
Barbara Masters, Public Policy Director, The California Endowment
Alvertha Peeny, VP Programs, California Community Foundation
Henry Ramos, Principal, Mauer Kunst Consulting & Director, the Diversity in Philanthropy Project
Alvin Starks, Open Society Institute

Other Service Organizations

Gisselle Acevedo, President, Para Los Ninos
Stewart Kwoh, Executive Director, Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC)
Alex Morales, President and CEO, Children's Bureau Headquarters
Bill Watanabe, Executive Director, Little Tokyo Service Center

Policy and Advocacy Experts

Alan Abramson, Director of the Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy, Aspen Institute
Eric Gorovitz, Alliance for Justice
Michelle Kipke, Director of Research, Los Angeles Children's Hospital
Ken Larsen, Director of Public Policy, California Association of Nonprofits
John Ott, John G. Ott & Associates

Appendix B: Interview Protocols

The following are the protocols that were used to guide the interviews. There is a different protocol for each type of interviewee.

Capacity Building Providers

Goal: Gather information about how Los Angeles organizations are provided support in CB and P&A. More specifically, we wish to better understand the costs of CB and P&A, gain a better sense of the best practices and approaches to helping organizations develop, build and sustain P&A programs (including costs and duration.)

Method: Individual interviews to providers no more than 10-15: Individuals (John Ott, Patricia Bowie, Jacqueline McCrowsky), Organizations with a strong record in P&A work/ Peer to Peer resources (Community Coalition, Children's Planning Council, Children's Bureau of Southern CA, Para Los Niños), Management support organizations (Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership, Center for Nonprofit Management, Community Partners, CAN)

- What are the lessons learned/ better practices to developing an effective policy and advocacy program? What are the (hard) costs to developing and sustaining these programs?
- What is the best way to build capacity of new, developing or fairly weak organizations to build policy and advocacy programs?
- How do you make a connection between capacity and your/an organization's ability to impact social change at the community level? Do you have theory of change; a logic model for this work?
- Do you have any case studies of successful policy and advocacy efforts either of yours or of other organizations?
- How do you measure success in policy and advocacy over the mid term (1-2 years)? Long-term (2+ years)?
- What are the ripe policy opportunities you see in LA County (or in your local area) for children 0-5? For any one of the five priority areas of the RGF?
- For management support organizations: What are the evaluation approaches being used to measure social change?
- For management support organizations: What are the evaluation methods being used to measure growth in learning organizations?

Foundations

Goal: Gather more information from local, state and national foundations about the best practices in CB and P&A, based on their evaluations; local funding dollars to fund CB and P&A; commitment of effort to fund organizational work in capacity building and policy and advocacy; understand what they think are critical issues in policy and advocacy for children 0-5 in LA and California.

Method 1A: Interview no more than 10 local and state foundations about the questions we want to better understand. This group will include First 5 (Evie, Teresa and staff), Weingart, Cal Comm Foundation, Liberty Hill, United Way LA, Keck TCE and others. Write up and analyze responses to include in white paper recommendation for best funding practices. Interview no more than 5 national foundations regarding the questions we want to better understand.

- What are the lessons learned/ better practices to funding effective capacity building and policy and advocacy programs? How many grantmaking dollars have been allotted to these efforts? Over what time?
- What is your past experience with capacity building? What works? What doesn't?
- What is the best way to build capacity of new, developing or fairly weak organizations to build policy and advocacy programs?
- In what ways do you build capacity of organizations? How does it vary by grantee size, focus and/or area of work?
- How do you make a connection between funding capacity and impacting social change at the community level? Do you have theory of change; a logic model for this work?
- Any case studies among your grantees of successful policy and advocacy efforts?
- How do you evaluate your efforts in capacity building and/or policy and advocacy? How do you disseminate this information?
- What are the evaluation approaches being used to measure social change?
- What's your definition of sustainability? What's the end point? What are the mid-point markers? Long-term ones?
- What kind of commitment do you have, if any, to funding capacity building and policy and advocacy efforts over the long haul?

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- What are the ripe policy opportunities you see in LA County (or in your local area) for children 0-5? For any one of the five priority areas of the RGF?
 - For First 5: What are the best ways for First 5 to leverage RGF efforts in capacity building and policy and advocacy internally (Pt3, CCI) ? Externally?
 - What are the resources for capacity building and policy and advocacy locally? (look at providers, funders – both private and public)

Organizations (Broadly Defined, including Loose Associations, Community Institutions, Collaboratives)

Goal 1: Collect more information about the needs and approaches to capacity building and policy/advocacy from the organizational perspective.

Method: With First 5 staff, identify organizations (no more than 10-15) they work with and don't to collect additional information from. Information will be collected via surveys and interviews (via phone and face to face). Information will be aggregated and included in white paper (secondary info collection and recommendations).

- From your vantage point, what are the key elements in building organizational capacity for sustainability? For policy and advocacy? Both?
- Does your organization have a strategic plan? What kind of capacity building goals does it have within the plan? What kind of policy and advocacy goals? What resources are tied to these goals?
- Given your experience, what is the best way to build capacity within your organization? (For what goals – sustainability? Policy and advocacy? Other?) How long will this take and what kind of resources would you need?
- Is there something going on in the local policy arena that First 5 LA should be supporting (given the RGF outcomes)?
- Do you do evaluation? What type(s)? How have they been helpful in developing your understanding of effectiveness? Sustainability? How have they led to growth? Adaptability within your organization?
- Do you have a theory of change (TOC)? Logic model? For the organization? For particular projects?
- If you do policy and advocacy work, how do you define and track sustainability of effort and outcomes? What would help to sustain or improve your work?

Policy and Advocacy Experts

Goal: Develop more knowledge about the issues and approaches to policy and advocacy that will have the most leverage for First 5 LA.

Method: Interview 3-4 policy experts in health, unintentional injury and parent education. Interview 5-7 government staff to understand the way that elected officials and their staff are thinking about organizational policy and advocacy efforts. Include thinking in recommendations section of white paper.

- What are the ripe policy opportunities you see in LA County (or in your local area) for children 0-5? For any one of the five priority areas of the RGF?
- What are the challenges you see for organizations involved in policy and advocacy for your area?
- Clarification of overall First 5 LA policy and advocacy goals needed. What are they? How will they be rolled out publicly?
- What are the best ways to leverage relationships to influence advocacy and policy? To sustain them over time for local change? Systems change?

Appendix C: Capacity Building Models

The following is a list of approaches used in capacity building as found in the capacity building literature review.

- Developing stronger financial management models
- Assistance with developing and maintaining strong collaborations and collaborative partnerships
- Marketing and public relations to publicize good work, develop “brand” or organizational recognition beyond constituents.
- Long range planning work needed by some of the smaller and mid range agencies.
- Capital infrastructure to provide services – this is an issue mainly for those with less than \$5 million budgets.
- Adequately trained staff and continuous staff training; this is true of all organizations. Staff retention also a critical concern.
- Information technology to do the work effectively also needed.
- New ways to think about opportunity development

Appendix D: Capacity Building Resources

The following is an abbreviated list of known national organizations with proven track record and LA experience. It was generated from the consultants' knowledge of the field.

- Alliance for Social Justice,
- Center for Community Change
- National Council de la Raza.
- Tides Center
- Community Partners
- Some existing entities, such as the Center for Non-Profit Management, or potential capacity builders, such as SCAP, are in transition.

Appendix E: Qualities of Effective Capacity Building Interventions

(From Thomas E. Backer, President, Human Interaction Research Institute)

HIRI's research identifies eight fundamental qualities of effective capacity building interventions:

1. **Comprehensive** - While narrowly-defined interventions can work, the most impactful capacity- building activities of foundations offer some degree of “one-stop shopping” in which grantees can access a range of assessment services, technical assistance, financial aid and other kinds of support.
2. **Customized** - The most effective capacity-building services are custom-tailored to the type of nonprofit, its community environment, and its place in the “organizational life cycle” (young, startup nonprofits are likely to have very different needs than more established organizations).
3. **Competence-Based** - The most effective capacity-building services are those that are (a) offered by well-trained providers (both foundation staff and expert service offerors), and (b) requested by knowledgeable, sophisticated “consumers” (the managers and board members of nonprofits).
4. **Timely** - The most effective capacity-building happens in the balanced space between “too slow to be relevant” (often because of funder delays in acting on grant applications!) and done too quickly to allow the flowering of an intervention in a complex context
5. **Peer-Connected** - The most effective capacity-building happens when there are opportunities for peer-to-peer networking, mentoring and information sharing.
6. **Assessment-Based** - The most effective capacity-building begins with a thorough assessment of the needs and assets of the nonprofit and the community in which it operates, which in turn drives the types of capacity-building services provided.
7. **Readiness-Based** - The most effective capacity-building occurs when the nonprofit “client” is ready to receive this specialized kind of service (e.g., the nonprofit is not in the midst of a major crisis, and thus unable to benefit from the intervention at that time).
8. **Contextualized** - The most effective capacity-building occurs in the larger context of other strengthening services a nonprofit is receiving, other

activities of the sponsoring foundation, and other elements of the current community environment.

Appendix F: Ways Policy and Advocacy Can be Done

Interview respondents also identified eight different methods that organizations can and do use as a way to engage in public policy and advocacy work. They include:

- Doing policy and advocacy work on one's own.
- Leading the field in some area of practice so that your program becomes the model that decision-makers know and prefer to fund.
- Creating a collaboration or partnership (could also be called initiative) that works together to achieve a specific policy or advocacy outcome. Can also result in permanent changes in that organization may also become more collaborative in program and service work as well as policy work.
- Being a member of a policy-based coalition or association that addresses their issues or concern. The association or coalition does the policy work for your organizations.
- Building the capacity of clients to advocate for themselves or building capacity of parents so they can advocate for their children.
- Gaining an appointment to a commission that is developing policy for a specific industry or geographic area.
- Organizing communities, groups of individuals or groups of nonprofits into a joint or single political voice.
- Doing advocacy in an invisible or quiet way every day but not calling it advocacy. (the organization may or may not know they are doing advocacy or policy work)

Appendix G: Advocacy Resources

National

The Alliance for Justice provides detailed information regarding lobbying laws and provides extensive guidelines for nonprofit organizations. The Alliance for Justice is a national association of advocacy organizations dedicated to securing access to justice, strengthening the public interest community, and developing the next generation of advocates. The organization offers training, produces materials, and gives technical assistance to nonprofit organizations through the Nonprofit Advocacy Project.

<http://www.afj.org/>

Aspen Institute: The Nonprofit Research Fund: The Aspen Institute funds research to increase the understanding of the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit advocacy and civic participation is one of the research areas of interest for the Nonprofit Research Fund. Research briefings, working papers, and other publications on nonprofit advocacy can be accessed through the Web.

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org>

Benton Foundation: The Benton Foundation supports the use of communication/technology that helps organize people to solve social problems. The Foundation focuses on three interdependent areas: legislative and regulatory policy on communications, technologies, and nonprofit organizations communication practices. The Foundation has built various Web sites with annotated and organized information about nonprofit organizations working on children's, arts, community health, and political campaign issues.

<http://www.benton.org/>

Brookings Institution: The Brookings Institution conducts analytical research on three main fields: emerging economic policy, foreign policy, and government and the policymaking process. Brookings has published several reports on civic engagement, campaign finance reform, and Internet voting.

<http://www.brook.edu>

California

Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest, previously a project of INDEPENDENT SECTOR, an organization whose goal is educating charities about the important role lobbying can play in achieving their missions. They provide several excellent instructional publications that can be currently downloaded from the IS web site or, for more information, contact:

Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest 2040 S Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009 202-387-5048 (or 5072) <http://www.independentsector.org/clpi>

Foundation for Child Development: The Foundation for Child Development supports research to examine the roles, effectiveness and potential of child advocacy organizations, especially their potential to bring about beneficial policy choices for children. <http://www.ffcd.org>

Independent Sector is a coalition of leading nonprofits, foundations, and corporations strengthening not-for-profit initiatives, philanthropy and citizen action. The web site provides links to many other valuable sites with information about the nonprofit sector. <http://www.independentsector.org>.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS): The IRS Web site contains technical guidelines about the procedures and requirements nonprofit advocacy organizations should follow in developing their activities. <http://www.irs.gov>

OMB Watch: OMB Watch is a nonprofit research, educational, and advocacy organization that focuses on budget, regulatory, and nonprofit advocacy and information policy. OMB Watch and the Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs at Tufts University are conducting a study to identify and better understand the factors that affect nonprofit organizations' participation in the public policy process. OMB Watch is also part of the coalition Let America Speak, a coalition that works to defend the advocacy rights of America's nonprofit organizations. <http://www.ombwatch.org/>

The Urban Institute publishes studies, reports and books on timely topics worthy of public consideration. The Institute is currently involved in a research initiative on nonprofit advocacy. The Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy (CNP) explores the role and impact of nonprofit organizations and philanthropy in democratic societies. CNP is developing the Nonprofit Advocacy Initiative, a five-year project that brings together people and institutions with diverse expertise to examine how the advocacy activities of nonprofit organizations affect public attitudes and civic participation, political discourse, public policy, and social change. <http://www.urban.org/centers/cnp.html>

***Standouts for Policy and Advocacy in Communities of Color: Community Coalition or SCOPE/AGENDA.**

*** The Alliance for Nonprofit Management is currently working on standards for effective capacity building assistance.**

Evaluation Toolkits

(Taken from The California Endowment's *The Challenge of Assessing Advocacy* (2005))

Coffman, Julia. "Strategic Communications Audits." Communications Consortium Media Center, 2004. <http://www.mediaevaluationproject.org/WorkingPaper1.pdf>

"Demonstration of 'Making the Case: A Learning and Measurement Tool for Social Change.'" Women's Funding Network. 24 March 2005.

"Making the Case: A Learning and Measurement Tool for Social Change: A Guide for Women's Funding Network Members." Women's Funding Network, 2004.

Puntenney, Deborah L. "Measuring Social Change Investments Achievement Vector." Women's Funding Network, 2002. http://www.wfnet.org/documents/publications/dpuntenney-vector_model.pdf

Reisman, Jane and Anne Gienapp. "Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning." Organizational Research Services. Prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004. <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/mc/readingroom/documents/theoryofchangemanual.pdf>

Reisman, Jane, Kasey Langley, Sarah Stachowiak, and Anne Gienapp. "A Practical Guide to Documenting Influence and Leverage in Making Connections Communities." Organizational Research Services. Prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004. <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/mc/readingroom/documents/influenceleveragemanual.pdf>

Appendix H: Qualities of Effective Policy and Advocacy Organizations/ Activities

Best advocacy practices and characteristics identified by interview respondents were mostly the same as those identified in the literature search. They included:

- Work in collations or collaborations is preferred.
- Have to be clear and specific about what the organization wants to achieve
- Need to have a plan B, need to be flexible.
- Be strategic, have a longer view, look 5 to ten years ahead.
- Use media well.
- Takes up to ten years to really come together and do the work.
- Strong leadership is essential
- Dedicated staff is preferred.
- Requires lots of internal organizing, preparedness.
- See every aspect of the organization related to policy work.
- Strong internal operations and infrastructure is in place.
- Train staff and partners in advocacy skills.
- Have actual relationships with legislators and decision-makers.
- Financial resources are adequate for the work to be done.
- Staff and volunteer leadership are also committed to policy work.
- There is energy and commitment to a long, intensive process.
- Understanding what you can and cannot do.
- Someone must champion the work.

Best practice skills not mentioned in the literature included:

- Focus advocacy efforts on paid staff, not on electeds because staff know the work and can be key advocates for organizations.
- Have compelling one-page description of what you want to achieve that is tied to your story and data.
- Costs of solution the organization proposes must be reasonable.
- Put your stories in papers read by the decision-makers you have targeted.
- Video tape advocacy work as it is done to share with others.
- Sponsor legislation with others.
- Involve people who are affected in the policy work.
- Must have resources to fight opponents particularly if businesses or corporations with lots of money (tobacco corporations and anti-smoking legislation was usually references or health care reform and insurance companies.
- Must be there every day, must work on policy every day. Show up often enough so that they know your face.

-
- Access decision-makers where they go; chamber of commerce, clubs, events, etc.

Although most of the respondents felt that thoughtful management support organizations were moving into providing policy training, perceptions of nonprofit investment in building their capacity to do policy and advocacy was mixed.

- Engaging in policy work requires major shift in organizational focus and infrastructure.
- Although few of the MSO organizations offer policy or advocacy training, and when they do not many groups attend. “We offer advocacy training, we can’t fill the seats” (Compass Point)
- Yet, when another MSO offered forum on critical policy issues, over 200 organizations participated. (Long Beach Partnership and CAN)
- Service providers that also do policy work said they felt that most nonprofits actually do some level of policy work but may not call it that and may even try to keep the work invisible since funders and board members are not supportive of policy practice.
- A certain level of capacity is needed to do the policy work, but neither the literature review nor the interviews make is clear whether nonprofits will know what skills to build or will see the need to build such skills.
- Because capacity building depends on work to be done, cookie cutter approach is not effective.
- Advocacy for what purpose? To affect county, build community? Assessment might be necessary to determine policy needs.

Appendix I: Key Activities of Successful Policy and Advocacy Organizations

The following grid is based on a model developed for *Make a Difference for Your Cause* from Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLPI). It captures the necessary characteristics, practices and strategies an organization would use for advocacy and policy work. It combines the most commonly-mentioned characteristics for a successful advocacy and policy practice found in the literature that identified after this sentence. (*OMB Watch, NCNA, CLPI, Baumgarten, Drabble, Watson, The Advocacy Project, Smucker, Advocacy Institute, Rees, Aspen Institute, The California Endowment, Alliance for Justice, Children's Advocacy Institute of San Diego, Children's Planning Council, Los Angeles*).

The last three columns in the table describe the elements that determine the depth of the characteristics listed in the first column. When examining the will or motivation of an organization, the goals, strategies, and benchmarks are essential elements to consider. Long-term, intermediate, and short-term outcomes should be examined as well as strategies and benchmarks for both public policy and the organization. Organizational knowledge/ skills and infrastructure are discussed in terms of the target audience being decision-makers, opponents, or partners and both the messages and messengers for each. Communication focuses on key activities such as grassroots training for communication, meeting with decision-makers and coordinating strategies with interest groups. Lastly, the impact of resources can be evaluated through indicators in policy change, community change, and organizational capacity.

Key Organizational Capacities and Characteristics	Goal, Strategies and Benchmarks to Be Achieved		
	Outcomes/Goal	Public Policy	Organizational
Will/Motivation 1) Understand why advocacy is important to the mission. 2) Organizational statement of commitment to advocacy for the long-haul (timeline not defined in literature).	Long-term		
	Intermediate		
	Short-term		
Knowledge/Skills 3) Know and understand rules and laws governing advocacy. 4) Understand legislative process. 5) Understand rules for funding policy and advocacy work. 6) Identify and understand key policy issues related to your mission and cause. 7) Understand strategy options.	Target Audience©		
	Decision-Makers or Other Targets	Partners	Opponents
	Who are they?	Who are they?	Who are they?
	Messages focused on target(s). Messages framed to meet interests of target.	Messages focused on target(s). Message framed to meet interests of target.	Messages focused on target(s). Message framed to meet interests of target.
Messengers: • Who are they? • How will they be engaged?	Messengers: • Who are they? • How will they be engaged?	Messengers: • Who are they? • How will they be engaged?	
Infrastructure 8) Has flexible policy on advocacy activities and/or policy engagement. 9) Governance structure for policy and advocacy. 10) Has decision-making process for advocacy and policy. 11) Policy agenda in place. 12) Visible presence in capital or where advocacy and/or policy target is located.	Tactics/Activities	Tactics/Activities	Tactics/Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct lobbying • Grassroots lobbying • Administration Advocacy • Coalitions/Alliances • Community groups • Media • Data analysis and research • Speaking • Experts • Testimony • Reality tours • Editorials/op-eds • Public hearings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate • Train • Mobilize • Meet with decision-makers • Media • Testimony • Reality tours • Coordinate strategies • Share resources • Listserv • Blog • Advisory committee 	
Communication 13) Communication and tracking			

<p>system in place.</p> <p>14) Media advocacy knowledge and experience.</p> <p>15) Web site used to gather and disseminate information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members/clients testify • Phone polls • Mobilize others • Grassroots training • Meet with decision-makers. • Coordinate strategies with interest groups 			
<p>Resources</p> <p>16) Dedicated funding that supports programs, operations and policy/advocacy work.</p> <p>18) Strategic plan (organizational, regional and/or statewide).</p> <p>19) Dedicated staff and/or lobbyist for policy and advocacy work who is held accountable for results.</p> <p>20) Relationships with decision-makers.</p> <p>21) Commitment to consistently build skills through capacity building.</p> <p>22) Research and analysis capability (or access to it).</p> <p>23) Excellent grasp of the facts about current legislation and research that supports your case.</p>	Possible Areas of Evaluation			
	Indicators	Policy	Community Change	Organizational Capacity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capacity to be effective advocates • Awareness, understanding support of issue • Uses variety of advocacy and policy methods. • Increased influence • Build knowledge/organizational learning • Strengthen ability to adapt • Credibility • Policy adopted by decision-makers 			
	Tools to gather data			
Building capacity to conduct self evaluation.				

Appendix J: Associated Costs of Policy and Advocacy

Respondents felt that it was too difficult to identify costs because so much was dependent on the specifics of the method and outcomes the nonprofit hoped to achieved.

- Some advocacy work can be done on a shoestring with few resources, but an organized, strong infrastructure and focused effort does seem to be necessary
- Although it is rare, small nonprofits can make great policy changes if they have the passion to do it
- Investment in staffing does seem to be necessary and for most groups may be the greatest cost
- Realize that it takes time to develop, implement and then achieve P & A success. (Model being talked about was 3 years to develop and move idea, 2 years to move agenda, 7 years to get policy change, and still working to get policy implemented)
- Can do a lot with volunteer support but the time to manage volunteers needs to be considered as a cost
- Don't really need money if lots of people are interested in your work.
- Long-term, systems change and social change usually means huge time and money costs to pull off
- California Association of Nonprofits spends \$250,000 to \$300,000 a year on statewide policy effort that includes one full-time staff , part-time legislative advocate on contract , ¼ to 1/3 of executive director and her assistant's time, quarterly meetings around the state for three advisory groups that are about 20 to 25 people each (many of them- but not all- pay their own travel costs), Sacramento Policy Days event that is often two days long, 20 or so electronic policy alerts, sometimes legal briefs have to be prepared (often requires that additional funding is found), rent for home office in Sacramento, daily presence in Sacramento, testifying at hearings, working with legislative staff to rewrite lots of legislation, bringing groups to Sacramento and other parts of the state for meetings and ten or so training and policy briefings around the state

Appendix K: Critical Opportunities for Prenatal to 5 Years

Policy issues selected by First 5 LA both appeal to bi-partisan support and are issues that create divides among policy leaders.

- Republicans will like the helping parents support their kids learning because they like responsibility but democrats may see the issue as livable wages and see that parents could do a better job if they didn't have to spend so much time working.
- Reducing unintended injuries to children and oral health will have bi-partisan support.
- Oral health was seen to be an important and “sexy” priority. One of the policy experts recommended that First 5 LA might want to look at the work done by the *Children’s Dental Health In Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties: Overview of Current Needs and Activities*, by Catherine Crystal Foster, Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health, January 2006.
- Good that First 5 LA is moving in this direction. Getting clear about what they want to achieve will be an important step.
- First 5 LA priorities will need to impact both public and private arena to produce meaningful change.

Although there was mild support for First 5 LA policies, respondents thought the following issues needed to be addressed during the prenatal to 5 years rather than the pre-teen or high school years. They each followed their suggestions with the comment, ‘Waiting until kids are ten or in high school is too late.’ Respondents also felt the issues below impacted families, parenting and communities and in that sense they were appropriate for First 5 LA.

- Reducing youth violence: too many children have seen violent acts or been impacted by them when they are quite small.
- Gang intervention as a family and community issue. It appears that waiting until kids are teens or a bit younger is too late. Like anti-smoking we need to start very early.
- Child obesity is a most critical issues that impacts health costs, health provision,
- School readiness: Children need to come into the school system ready to do work. They are enormously behind. Parents need help, need to band together, talk more. Need to build parent advocacy skills. Can be done through community capacity building. Parents need networks they can rely on. Get residents involved in prevention, teach healthy behavior.
- Do something about school drop out rate before kids get there. With 50% drop out rate The first three years of a child's life becomes the framework for a future that can turn in many directions.
- With 90 percent of the children who die from abuse being under the age of five, helping parents with children newborn through age three seems very

critical. By giving parents the knowledge and support they need, the horrors of child abuse can be prevented.

Parents' Ability to Support Their Child's Learning

- From the perspective of organizations working with monolingual, immigrant Latino families, it is important to develop a county wide approach to training families about their legal rights, especially if family members are undocumented.
- Parent and community education to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Train parents/educators to detect and support children prenatal to 5 who may have mild to moderate special needs.
- Move debate re: standards and academic achievement away from test scores. Position this as an issue about engaging parents as child's first teacher and giving all parents the skills and resources to help kids learn and give them access to quality preschool.
- Systems change so that parent education and strengthening is based on need.
- Pre-Kindergarten: \$600 million for LA UP will eventually run out, but it needs to continue and should be lined with P-3 priorities, since successful UP models touted are costly and rely on healthy families and kids that are ready to learn (and may not, if issues preventing learning are not dealt with before pre-kindergarten).
- Family support on prevention and away from detention. What to do with those families who may have already entered the child welfare system? How do we support them through a preventative approach?
- Teaching and using evidenced based approaches, such as the "Incredible Years" curriculum.

Physical Activity

- Universal screening for all children prenatal to 5
- Improve children's physical health through increased parent and teacher education and enthusiasm for outdoor learning
- Campaign to link physical activity and nutrition; good physical health involves both, not just one.
- Lifestyle education. Teach parents how to break out of obsession with electronic media and help them get their kids to connect with the outdoors and nature (even in inner city neighborhoods.)
- Campaign to raise awareness of poverty and how it affects parents' ability to raise families healthily.

-
- School focus on better nutrition: changing what is offered and how children eat at school.
 - Universal health insurance

Other: Cultural and Language Appropriateness

Policy and advocacy needs to be culturally and language appropriate, especially if working to build constituent capacity or raise awareness about issues that may be taboo, such as mental health or limits regarding physical punishment of kids.