



Champions For Our Children

Memo

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To: Board of Commissioner
From: Evelyn V. Martinez, Executive Director
Date: June 14, 2007
Copies To:
Subject: **INFORMATION: The Sunsetting of the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council (CPC) Strategic Partnership with First 5 LA**

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BACKGROUND:

In July 2002, the Commission approved a four-year allocation of \$6,054,375 to complement and enhance CPC's capacity to strengthen the SPA/AIC Councils, enhancing data and research efforts, and building a commitment to outcomes for children, particularly school readiness. The partnership was based on four key goals (Appendix 1) which were then incorporated in the Scope of Work (SOW). In July 2006, the Commission approved CPC for an additional one-year no-cost extension to finalize their deliverables due to a delayed start-up in the first year. During this period, the Community Building Institute (CBI) was added as a deliverable in their SOW. This partnership will sunset in September 2007.

This strategic partnership was established by the Commission due to the Commission's strong interest in aligning its work with the SPA/AIC Councils to implement aggressive community engagement strategies around school readiness. The Commission's interest also extended to CPC's position and expertise as a convener and broker which added value to the development of Commission initiatives. The Commission envisioned pursuing systems improvement efforts in partnership with CPC. With regards to enhancing data and research methods, the Commission's investment in CPC's infrastructure was aimed at supporting their efforts to develop the capacity to use qualitative and quantitative data to support their community planning and engagement activities. This partnership was envisioned to help promote policies and improve systems and support for children and families in Los Angeles County.

CPC's SOW includes three key programmatic strategies related to the four goals (noted in Appendix 1) that centered on (1) Capacity Building, (2) Systems Improvement, and (3) Data Improvement and Research. The SOW states that CPC will achieve its work around these programmatic strategies through efforts that lead to deliverables such as parent leadership trainings, policy

convenings, health fairs, collection of data and development of data indicator reports, etc. The strategies are further expanded to specific objectives and activities noted in the Discussion section.

A notable key deliverable outlined between First 5 LA and CPC is the Community Building Institute (CBI) which was originally developed by CPC in the Fall of 2005. It is designed to provide training and support for the community engagement and community building efforts of CPC's network of SPA/AIC Councils and associated neighborhood groups. Moreover, the CBI has been instrumental in providing timely organizational tools for parents to organize themselves in the community on behalf of their children and families. Through the CBI, CPC has been providing training and capacity building to parents and residents of the different SPA/AIC Councils. These training sessions have focused on community organizing, and have also included topics such as school readiness, parenting, youth leadership development, nutrition, and other health issues.

During the course of this strategic partnership, CPC's direction has shifted from planning for services to an emphasis on community engagement and empowerment. Given the challenges of conducting community capacity building and engagement efforts in general, this joint partnership between CPC and First 5 LA has produced effective neighborhood community building activities through the SPA/AIC Councils. Furthermore, this partnership promotes the Commission's ability to accomplish its objectives to build social capital. CPC has been extensively engaged on activities that shaped the understanding of child and family outcomes across the county with an emphasis on school readiness through data collection and reporting methods as well as a wide range of educational events. This partnership has helped to inform many of the planning and investment activities of the Commission.

DISCUSSION:

The CPC strategic partnership with First 5 LA is sunsetting in September 2007 and therefore, the sunsetting review has been completed in accordance with the Commission's protocol. This review considers the Commission's objectives across all the investments in the current strategic plan and programmatic and fiscal priorities. The sunsetting review will be applied to all initiatives and strategic partnerships that conclude during the implementation of the Next Five Strategic Plan. This protocol and review process was presented and agreed to by Commissioners, staff, and the public at the April 2006 Joint Planning Committee Meeting.

The sunsetting process involves two phases of review: (1) Compliance and (2) Alignment with Programmatic and Fiscal Policies. The compliance phase reviews the strategic partners' compliance with First 5 LA's financial and programmatic policies throughout the term of the contract, as determined by the budget, progress reports, site visit notes, evaluation, contract agreements, discussions and correspondence between CPC and First 5 LA. The second phase consists of a review to examine the extent that the initiative/strategic partner aligns with First 5 LA's November 2005 Revised Programmatic and Fiscal Policies that outline the guiding principles, priorities, and funding criteria that will guide the remainder of the Commission's investments through 2009. Following the completion of the CPC sunsetting process, staff met with Commissioner Liaisons to mutually determine the recommendation to be made to the Board. The following are the CPC strategic partnership sunsetting review highlights:

(1) Compliance:

The major objectives of the CPC's strategic partnership include:

- Engagement and support groups for parents, residents, and/or youth within neighborhoods to build community capacity;

- Development of Parent Action Networks, Community Knowing Circles, and Neighborhood Action Councils, including the CBI;
- Engagement and support of collaborative partnerships with school leaders and city leaders around First 5 LA and CPC's School Readiness Agenda;
- Building collaborations that improve and transform the systems that directly impact children and their families;
- Formation of the Joint Learning Project on community engagement (involving an empowerment evaluation model of CPC's community engagement activities).

Overall CPC is compliant in achieving many of its established objectives which support the three programmatic strategies. Through the strengthening of the SPA/AIC Councils, CPC has built Parent Action Networks, Community Knowing Circles, and Neighborhood Action Councils in each SPA/AIC Council. As noted above, the CBI has been beneficial in supplying parents with the necessary organizational tools to advocate on behalf of their children and families. Much of CPC's efforts on community mobilization have been focused on building the capacity of parents and residents. Parents and residents are able to interact and work with the prime stakeholders that influence their child and family well-being and create their own solutions on issues of interest in the SPA/AIC Councils (see Community Assets and Linkages for example).

Financial Compliance: CPC has been in financial compliance throughout the life of the contract and appear to have the financial resources readily available to meet its obligation, based on its FY 05-06 position. First 5 LA finance staff has carefully reviewed the audited financial statements for the fiscal years in this multi-year partnership for CPC, and calculated the liquidity ratios to determine the financial position for this agency. The following ratios have been calculated based on their most recent audit (FY 05-06). The liquidity ratio is approximately 4.01, which is higher than the private sector industry average which indicates that this agency has four (4) times more liquid assets than liabilities. In conclusion, based on the information provided and the interaction the finance department has had during the course of this contract, it appears that CPC has the financial capacity to finance and manage the financial requirements of the strategic partnership.

Programmatic Compliance: As of May 2007, CPC has submitted all semi-annual progress reports for this contract. Throughout the past five years, CPC has been timely in the submission of all required programmatic reports. Staff continues to work with CPC to determine the extent to which they will be able to complete all of the stated objectives and agreed upon work by the end of the contract period in September 2007. A significant number of the major components and deliverables of the SOW, including the Children's Score Card, the School Leaders Summit, the City Leaders Summit, the Joint Learning Project, and developing new twelve (12) month work plans outlining engagement/organizing and community building strategies have been completed as of May 2007. It is expected that by the end of the contract period in September 2007, CPC will have finalized all their required deliverables.

(2) Alignment:

Based on the Commission's sunsetting review process, it has been determined that CPC is in alignment with First 5 LA's goals and priorities, as detailed below:

Evidence-based Models: CPC's community change efforts have been grounded in research, evidence-based models, and their many years of experience in community engagement approaches. A prime model that CPC has been utilizing in communities is the Asset Building Community Development (ABCD) model which is based on the Social Capital Theory in addition to other tools such as strength based assessments and focus groups. Thus, a finding from the Joint Learning Project is that the SPA/AIC Councils have designed and implemented nine unique models of

community engagement based on the ABCD approach. Their strategies differ except that all SPA/AIC Councils engage in community building in neighborhood-based, parent, and youth groups.

Sustainability: As described in First 5 LA's Revised Programmatic and Fiscal Policies, sustainability is not merely the continuation of programs, nor leveraging external financial resources, but as the process by which individuals and communities are strengthened and supported, systems are improved, best practices are established and utilized, and models are created to fill systems and service gaps. CPC has been strengthening and supporting individuals and communities and establishing best practices through the system of the SPA/AIC Councils. The SPA/AIC Councils have been effective in building social capital in communities, networking community residents and stakeholders, and in providing skills to parents and families to advocate for themselves and their children.

Leveraging: This criterion assesses if the funding provided is being used effectively and efficiently by all who are focused on the developmental needs of children and their families. CPC has leveraged the resources provided through this partnership to expand the network of SPA/AIC Councils. Through their engagement with school, city and community leaders, CPC has leveraged existing social capital to build up support and interest in children's issues in the context of their communities. The Commission's investment in CPC has helped local SPA/AIC Councils leverage local community assets. CPC has also leveraged funding from the LA County government system as well as private foundations such as the California Endowment, Annie E. Casey Foundation and Marguerite Casey Foundation. CPC has obtained in-kind resources from other entities to augment all their resources and services. For example, SPA Council 3 leveraged its stakeholders to organize a local Healthy Kids Campaign to insure more children in the California Health Insurance Program.

Linkages: CPC is a very active member of the Interagency Operations Group (IOG) of the Los Angeles County, and CPC is linking county agencies to interact with communities through the SPA/AIC Council network. CPC's involvement with IOG has also helped them craft IOG's Community Building Strategies of the Shared Community-County Outcomes, Indicators, and Strategies. Simultaneously, CPC has been creating linkages with many of First 5 LA investments. For example, First 5 LA grantees interact with the SPA/AIC Councils with regard to the delivery of services for children and families. Similarly, the SPA/AIC Councils have connected families and children to many of the grantees funded by the Commission.

Community Assets: The SPA/AIC Councils are the means for CPC to identify community needs and assets. The Councils act as facilitators that bring together neighborhood groups to address the community needs by building upon community strengths. Together, SPA Councils and neighborhood groups develop the appropriate steps to address community issues. For example, SPA Council 2 mobilized Marson Park Project area residents to send a letter to the LA City Mayor's Office expressing their concerns regarding delays in the park's construction. The Mayor's office responded to the residents of this area to ensure the construction of the park. By using the tools learned in many of CPC's community engagement and empowerment activities, SPA Council 2 residents generated the solutions to address their needs, and the Mayor's office built a recreational space in response to their advocacy.

Outcomes Accountability: The Joint Learning Project describes the unique models of community engagement found in the SPA/AIC Councils and presents a balanced view of how the Councils have adapted to the shift that CPC made from a service-orientation philosophy to one that is premised on community engagement. In this partnership, direct services were not delivered to children zero through five years of age. Therefore, it was not appropriate to collect outcome data.

Adherence to First 5 LA Principles: CPC has been able to comply with eight (8) of the nine (9) of the objectives (Appendix 2). CPC has conducted all of their activities in First 5 LA targeted communities. Every SPA/AIC Council covers priority areas of interest to First 5 LA such as nutrition, parenting classes, and school readiness among other subjects.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the sunsetting review process, staff and the Commissioner Liaisons are recommending that the CPC Strategic Partnership be renewed. The Commissioners Liaisons and staff have established that the following agreements be included in the renewal of the CPC Strategic Partnership.

- Continuation of the CPC's SPA/AIC Council infrastructure development to further expand the community organizing and engagement efforts throughout the Councils
- Participation of diverse ethnic communities including parent and resident involvement in each of the SPA/AIC Councils to reflect the demographics of Los Angeles County
- Integration of new technologies in the SPA/AIC Councils to further enhance data collection to facilitate improved policy decisions impacting children and families
- Implementation of Community Building Institute (CBI) to increase parent leadership in SPA/AIC Councils

Furthermore, it was determined by Commissioner Liaisons that following discussion of the renewal of the CPC Strategic Partnership, with Commission direction, staff will present a funding recommendation at the July 2007 Board meeting to continue our partnership with CPC.