Dear Potential Applicant:

On behalf of First 5 LA, I am pleased to present these grant application guidelines for First 5 LA's Community Opportunities Fund. Outlined in the following pages are tools that will assist grant seekers in submitting applications for funding from First 5 LA. We wish to partner with organizations through this fund to further our vision of creating and sustaining a future where all young children grow up healthy, are eager to learn, and reach their full potential.

First 5 LA is a unique child advocacy organization created by California voters to invest tobacco tax revenues in programs to improve the lives of children in Los Angeles County, from prenatal through age five. Since 1998, First 5 LA has invested in a myriad of programs and agencies with the goal of ensuring that young children are safe, healthy, and ready to learn.

First 5 LA recognizes that community agencies are critical partners in helping to create a society where young children are valued and given the best start possible in life. In our continued efforts to create effective and sustainable change for young children and their families, grants through the Community Opportunities Fund will support two types of activities: organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy. Funding these types of activities will contribute to the long-term vision of the Commission.

While First 5 LA will continue to fund direct service supports for families through our other investments, these types of services are not eligible for funding through the Community Opportunities Fund. Please closely read the Community Opportunities Fund definitions of organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy to ensure your agency’s needs are appropriate for this fund.

Thank you for your dedication to the children and families of Los Angeles County and for supporting the vision and mission of First 5 LA.

Sincerely,

Evelyn V. Martinez
Executive Director
Funding Priorities

First 5 LA’s Community Opportunities Fund has been designed to address three Funding Priority areas within the “Next Five Strategic Plan.” These Funding Priorities are:

- Supportive Parents/Caregivers
- Good Health
- Prevention of Unintentional Injuries

The Commission recognizes that many programs are designed to comprehensively address a number of areas. However, for the purposes of the Community Opportunities Fund, applicants must identify one out of the three Funding Priorities to be the major focus of the project and clearly explain how the project will contribute to the achievement of the Funding Priority goal.

It is intended that applicants have past experience or currently work within one of the Funding Priorities listed above. While this fund will not provide funding for any direct services related to these Priorities, support from the Community Opportunities Fund for organizational capacity building or policy and advocacy activities is intended to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the organization’s programs related to these Priorities.

Applicants must explain how the proposed organizational capacity building or policy and advocacy activities will both increase their organizational effectiveness in the short-term as well as create movement toward impacting a long-term outcome within one of the three Funding Priority areas.

These Priorities are intentionally broad to allow for creative and innovative capacity building and policy and advocacy ideas to be generated by applicant organizations, and for First 5 LA’s investments to have long-term impact on a greater array of community needs.

A summary of each Funding Priority is provided on the next pages, along with First 5 LA’s desired outcomes within the Priority.
Funding Priority 1: Supportive Parents/Caregivers

**Goal:** Increase parents and caregivers’ ability to support their children's learning.

During the early years of a child's life, parents have a critical role to play as their child’s first and most influential teacher. However, many parents struggle to promote their child's development to its full extent due to challenges in the family's environment. Research has shown that addressing a family's social, emotional, physical and economic needs enables them to provide the support necessary for their child's developmental needs.

First 5 LA seeks to fund organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy activities that will lead to long-term impact on one or more of the following outcomes:

- Parents' integration into social networks through increased contact and communication with other individuals and promotion of parents' development of intimate ties
- Parents' knowledge of parenting skills and child development through the promotion of strengths-based family-centered assistance
- Concrete support to parents in times of crises—specifically support that meets families' most immediate needs of food, shelter, clothing and health care

Funding Priority 2: Good Health

**Goal:** Improve children's health through good nutrition, physical activity and oral care.

Nutritional practices, physical activity and oral care collectively affect a child's health in many ways. In 2005, the Institute of Medicine released a report calling the prevention of childhood obesity a national priority due to its serious, adverse health consequences, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol and orthopedic complications. To reverse the trend, children must have access to and consume healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, consume adequate portion sizes, limit their intake of fats and added sugars, and get plenty of physical activity. Studies of child nutrition and growth have also detailed the critical role parents play in their child's development of healthy food and activity-related behaviors.

Poor nutrition also precipitates various oral infectious diseases, including dental cavities, developmental defects of enamel, dental erosion and periodontal disease. Research has indicated distinctive patterns of severe tooth decay among infants and young children.

Improving families' access to preventive oral health services is crucial to preventing serious oral health conditions during early childhood.
First 5 LA seeks to fund organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy activities that will lead to long-term impact on one or more of the following outcomes:

- Children's consumption of the recommended daily intake of nutrients, including fruits and vegetables
- Children and families' access to fruits and vegetables within their community
- Children and families' access to appropriate locations and opportunities for physical activity
- Children's participation in age-appropriate physical activity
- Families' access to appropriate oral health care resources
- Parents' awareness of early childhood oral health needs and milestones
- Families' utilization of preventive and therapeutic dental health services

**Funding Priority 3: Prevention of Unintentional Injuries**

**Goal:** Decrease the incidence of unintentional injuries among young children.

Unintentional injuries continue to be one of the leading causes of injury and death among young children in Los Angeles County, particularly children under the age of four. Unintentional injuries refer to those childhood injuries that are accidental but preventable, and may include, but are not limited to, passenger safety, fire safety, water safety, poisoning and home safety.

First 5 LA seeks to fund organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy activities that will lead to long-term impact on one or more of the following outcomes:

- Parents and caregivers' awareness of how to keep children safe at every stage of development
- Improved child safety regulation (e.g. the use of car seats, pedestrian safety laws, product safety requirements, etc.)
- Communities providing a safe environment where young children can grow and thrive (e.g. pedestrian safety, safe play equipment at parks, etc.)

Note: Efforts to eliminate community violence, while essential, will not be considered under this Funding Priority.
Types of Grants

In order to enable organizations to achieve more widespread and long-term impacts on the previously outlined Funding Priorities, and in an attempt to increase the sustainability of its investments, First 5 LA will fund organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy projects that will impact the organization's ability to effect change in one of the Funding Priorities.

By funding organizational capacity building activities, the Commission aims to enable organizations to increase and/or improve their ongoing efforts, while policy and advocacy projects are intended to improve the community conditions that facilitate achievement of organizations' long-term goals.

Applications should clearly illustrate how implementation of the proposed organizational capacity building or policy and advocacy activity will contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes within the Funding Priorities outlined in the previous pages. Please read the definition of each type of grant given below in order to ensure that your application is eligible for funding.

Organizational Capacity Building

Organizational capacity building refers to organizational development activities that build and sustain growth and effectiveness with the intention of impacting the long-term goal within the selected Funding Priority area. Capacity building efforts should focus on developing organizations that strive to continually learn, analyze and act to improve their mission-based priorities. Capacity building projects should create change that is sustainable beyond the life of the grant. First 5 LA will fund the following types of organizational capacity building projects:

- Programmatic: Strengthening the organization's ability to carry out programs
- Operational: Improving the organization's overall functioning
- Policy and Advocacy: Increasing the organization's ability to effectively impact policy

Applicants for capacity building grants may request up to $150,000 over a maximum grant period of three years. Requested amounts and lengths of grants must be appropriate for the proposed activities.

Policy and Advocacy

Policy and advocacy are generally related activities that build public support for private and/or public goals. Advocacy is the effort to raise public awareness and influence public policy (at the community, city, county, state or federal level) through various forms of persuasive communication and education. Policy is a plan of action to guide decisions and actions.

First 5 LA funds may not be used for the lobbying of any policymaker, local, state, or federal legislative agency. Also, funds may not be used to influence voters to support or oppose any candidate, specific legislation, or ballot measure. It is illegal to use First 5 LA funds for any political campaigns or religious purpose.

Applicants for policy and advocacy grants may request up to $500,000 over a maximum grant period of five years. Requested amounts and lengths of grants must be appropriate for the proposed activities.
How to Apply

All applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to initiate the application process. The LOI can be accessed online through First 5 LA’s website www.first5la.org/cof.htm. In order to prepare to complete the LOI, applicants should clearly articulate the following:

1. The history of the applicant organization or collaborative
2. An explanation of the organization’s/collaborative’s mission
3. Detail of the organization’s/collaborative’s experiences within the Funding Priority area
4. A description of the proposed project
5. An explanation of the organization’s readiness to implement the proposed project
6. An explanation of how the project will impact short and mid-term outcomes, as well as long-term outcomes within the selected Funding Priority area

Assessment Tools

In preparing to complete the LOI and proposal (if requested), applicants are encouraged to conduct an assessment of their agency’s capacity building needs or capacity to conduct policy and advocacy activities, using either an externally developed tool or one developed by the applicant. Examples of tools are available to view at www.first5la.org/cof.htm.

If possible, agencies should use the results of their assessment to explain and justify their request from First 5 LA. Use of these tools is not required at the LOI stage, nor does it ensure that applicants will receive funding from First 5 LA. An assessment may be required at the proposal stage.

Logic Modeling

Through the Community Opportunities Fund, First 5 LA is seeking to fund organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy projects that clearly describe how they will achieve short-term and mid-term outcomes that will ultimately produce the desired long-term outcomes. A logic model is a visual depiction (resembling a flowchart) of the potential linkages, relationships and connections between proposed project activities and their impact on the selected Funding Priority.

A logic model can serve as a guide for applicants in presenting their pathway of change from the present situation to where they expect to be as a result of this investment. Competitive applicants should articulate how and why their proposed activities could result in short- and medium-term outcomes that are critical conditions to successfully achieving long-term outcomes. More information on logic modeling can be accessed at www.first5la.org/cof.htm.

Applicants will not be required to submit a logic model at the LOI phase, but it is critical that the LOI reflects a clear understanding of how the applicant’s proposed project will impact both their own organizational effectiveness and the selected Funding Priority. A logic model will be required of those applicants that are requested to submit a full proposal.
Eligibility Requirements

In order to apply for the Community Opportunities Fund, organizations and projects must meet the following criteria:

- Nonprofit organizations must have evidence of tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and deemed “not a private foundation” under Section 509(a); or if the applicant organization lacks nonprofit status, the applicant must have a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization serving as a fiscal sponsor.

- Public agencies may apply for policy and advocacy grants, but are not eligible for organizational capacity building grants.

- Organizations must reside within and serve residents of Los Angeles County.

- Proposed project activities must ultimately benefit children age prenatal through five years old.

Restricted Activities

First 5 LA will not fund the following:

- Political campaigns, voter registration drives and lobbying.

- Capital improvements.

- Direct services.

- Salaries for new or existing staff to provide direct services.

- Development of curricula to be used for direct services.

- Endowments or other fundraising events.

- Support solely for existing operations.

- Activities with religious purposes.

- Grants to individuals.

- Operating deficits or retirement of debt.
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is there a deadline for submitting my Letter of Intent? How long does the grant review process take?
First 5 LA will accept Letters of Intent for the Community Opportunities Fund on an ongoing basis over the course of four funding cycles. You may review the First 5 LA website (www.first5la.org/cof.htm) for current LOI deadlines. First 5 LA will spend approximately two months reviewing the Letters of Intent after the due date for each funding cycle. The process will take approximately six months from the submission of the LOI to approval by the Board of Commissioners.

2. How much money can I apply for? Is there a range?
First 5 LA has allocated $13 million to the Community Opportunities Fund to be dispersed across four cycles ($3.25 million per cycle). Organizational capacity building grants cannot exceed a total allocation of $150,000, and policy and advocacy grants cannot exceed $500,000. In applying, applicants should be mindful that they are entering a highly competitive process with limited funding available. Application budgets will be closely reviewed at the proposal stage to determine whether the amount requested matches the proposed project.

3. How long can my grant last?
Applicants may apply for a maximum grant period of three years for an organizational capacity building grant, or five years for a policy and advocacy grant. To be successful, applicants must justify that the work proposed in their application requires the length of time proposed.

4. Can my organization receive more than one grant from the Community Opportunities Fund?
No. An organization may receive only one Community Opportunities Fund grant. Organizations that receive a grant in one cycle will not be eligible for any subsequent cycles.

5. Can my organization submit more than one application per grant cycle?
No. Only one application will be considered per agency per grant cycle.

6. If my application is denied, may I reapply?
Organizations that are denied funding may reapply in subsequent cycles. However, organizations are not encouraged to reapply with a program that has previously been denied unless a significant change in the agency or the community context has occurred.

7. How can I get help with my application?
Several resources are available to help organizations develop their applications:
- First 5 LA will be hosting “Informational Sessions” at the beginning of each funding cycle to provide information and assistance in applying for funding. The person responsible for applying for funding at an agency should attend these workshops, as well as the person who will be responsible for designing and implementing the project. Dates, times, and locations of sessions may be found on the First 5 LA website (www.first5la.org/cof.htm) near the start of each new funding cycle.
- Questions may be directed to COF@first5la.org, however due to the expected volume of applicants, one-on-one assistance may be limited. Applicants are encouraged to attend an informational session.

8. I have another grant from First 5 LA. Can I apply for funding from the Community Opportunities Fund?
Yes.

9. Do we have to submit the application online?
All applications must be submitted online at www.first5la.org/cof.htm. Agencies lacking Internet access are encouraged to complete their application using computer resources in their community.

10. What types of activities qualify for the Community Opportunities Fund?
Applicants must apply for a project that falls within the scope of the definitions of organizational capacity building and policy and advocacy provided within these guidelines.
For organizational capacity building grant requests, applicants must select one of the following types of projects: programmatic, operational, or policy and advocacy.

Examples of programmatic or operational capacity building may include, but are not limited to developing or creating:
- Diversified funding streams
- Effective governance and leadership
- Staff retention strategies
- Effective information technology utilization
- Planning and budgeting tools
- Sustainability plans

Examples of policy and advocacy capacity building may include, but are not limited to developing or strengthening:
- Organizational vision related to policy and advocacy
- Dedicated policy staff
- Organizational networks and partnerships
- Understanding of advocacy regulations
- Data or policy analysis skills
- Advocacy tools

Examples of policy and advocacy activities may include, but are not limited to:
- Collecting and using data and needs assessments
- Mapping assets
- Building coalitions
- Generating direct involvement of constituents
- Employing media or technology strategies

Restricted Activities:
- Political campaigns, voter registration drives and lobbying
- Capital improvements
- Direct services
- Salaries for new or existing staff to provide direct services
- Curricula to be used for direct services
- Endowments or other fundraising events
- Support solely for existing operations
- Activities with religious purposes
- Grants to individuals
- Operating deficits or retirement of debt

11 How does First 5 LA support smaller and/or newer organizations?
First 5 LA is committed to providing grants to agencies of all sizes. The review process is designed to consider organizations that understand and have strong connections to their target communities and have the ability to impact outcomes within these communities. These organizations may include grassroots organizations that have developed out of the communities they serve, or emerging organizations that are still developing their internal infrastructure.

12 Do you conduct site visits?
To gather information as part of the review process, site visits may be conducted for those organizations that have been invited to submit proposals. Site visits will not be conducted during the LOI stage.

13 How can I check on the status of my grant application?
Applicants will be sent a letter (via e-mail) indicating receipt of their LOI, and will also receive e-mail notification following the review process indicating whether or not they have been selected to submit a full proposal.

14 If my application is denied, will I find out why?
For applications that are denied at the LOI stage, general information will be provided in the declination letter. However, due to the expected volume of LOIs, staff will not be available to meet or discuss declinations with agencies individually. At the proposal stage, staff will provide, upon request, feedback via telephone conferences.

15 Can I apply as part of a collaborative?
Organizations may apply as part of a collaborative, with one agency serving as the fiscal agent and responsible party for the entire group.
Application and Review Process

Stage 1: Letter of Intent (LOI)

1. Complete and Submit a Letter of Intent
All applicants are required to complete an LOI to initiate the application process with First 5 LA. The LOI must be completed and submitted online. The form can be accessed at www.first5la.org/cof.htm. Additionally, financial information will be requested at this initial stage, which may require mailing documents if electronic versions are not available. All applicants will receive an e-mail notifying them that First 5 LA has received their LOI.

2. Letter of Intent Review
First 5 LA staff will review the LOI within two months of its receipt using the review tool developed from the general selection criteria outlined in these guidelines. All applicants will receive an e-mail notification either declining their LOI or inviting them to submit a proposal.

Stage 2: Proposal

3. Proposal Submission
Selected applicants will be invited to submit a proposal using the online proposal application and will be given approximately one to two months from the date of notification to do so. Applicants will be required at this stage to develop a logic model, and may be required to complete an organizational assessment. First 5 LA program officers will be available at this stage to answer questions and provide assistance to applicants.

4. Proposal Review
Proposals will be reviewed by First 5 LA staff and external reviewers. This review process may include additional requests for information and possibly a site visit. Following the completion of the review process, a recommendation of selected applicants will be presented to the Board of Commissioners.

5. Board Approval
Following Commission approval of the funding recommendations, notification letters will be sent to all applicants informing them of whether their proposal was accepted or declined.

6. Contract Negotiations
Once all applicants are selected, the contract negotiation period will begin. This process typically takes one to two months. Once the contract is fully executed, grantees can begin to implement their project and receive funds.

7. Feedback on Declination
All decisions made by the team of reviewers will be final (no appeals process). For the LOI, First 5 LA will provide general feedback as to why the request was declined within the declination letter. For the proposal, a declination letter will be sent, and upon request, staff will make available individual feedback over the phone.
Selection Criteria

Applications to First 5 LA will be reviewed based on criteria generated from the following review areas:

Organizational Experience and Capacity
Applicants should demonstrate that they have the necessary experience and capacity to undertake the proposed project. Applicants are expected to have past and/or current experience within the selected Funding Priority area, and to have the necessary capabilities and preparedness to implement the proposed activities. If applicable, applicants must have been in compliance with all previous First 5 LA contracts.

Proposed Project
Applicants should demonstrate that their program design has been thoughtfully developed within the context of the agency and its community, and recognize the potential impact the project will have within the organization, as well as among its target population.

Potential for Program to Impact Funding Priorities
Applicants must demonstrate a clear linkage between their proposed work and its potential to impact the selected Funding Priority area.

Financial Capacity
Applicants must demonstrate that they have the capacity to manage all financial requirements related to the implementation of the program. If programmatic criteria are met, financial documents requested at the LOI phase will be reviewed to assess fiscal health.
Additional Review Considerations

Organizations whose proposed projects have any of the following characteristics are especially encouraged to apply:

- Target the prenatal through age three population
- Will impact all (or large sections) of Los Angeles County
- Work in one or more of the following communities:
  - Baldwin Park
  - Bell
  - El Monte
  - Hawthorne
  - Huntington Park
  - Lancaster
  - La Puente
  - Lynwood
  - Panorama City
  - South Gate
  - Areas of South Los Angeles (90002, 90003, 90011, 90044)
  - Areas of Long Beach (90806, 90819, 90805)

The Commission will seek to fund in a manner that is equitable across Los Angeles County and the Funding Priorities.

Disclaimer: The Commission may, at its sole discretion, reject any or all applications submitted in response to these guidelines. The Commission also reserves the right to cancel this process, at its sole discretion, at any time before execution of an agreement. The Commission shall not be liable for any costs incurred in connection with the preparation of any application submitted in response to these guidelines. Any application, including attached materials, submitted in response to these guidelines shall become property of the Commission.

The Commission may, at its sole discretion, reject an application from any current grantee, if such grantee is found to be noncompliant with prior or current Proposition 10 grants.

Contact Information

First 5 LA
750 N. Alameda Street, Suite 300
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 482-5902
www.first5la.org/cof.htm

Please send questions to:
COF@first5la.org