

Summary of Commission Actions



Champions For Our Children
www.First5LA.org

Meeting of June 13, 2013

Fiscal Year 2013/14 Budget Approved

The Commission approved \$194.3 million to fund 54 different First 5 LA initiatives and programs for children 0-5 and their families in fiscal year 2013/14. Areas of investment include parenting support and child safety, perinatal support, early childhood education work force development, children's dental and vision care, school readiness, mental health and the place-based effort, Best Start.

The program budget represents 92 percent of the overall annual budget for First 5 LA. In 2011-2012, nearly 100,000 children in Los Angeles County were served through programs the agency funded.

An additional \$17.8 million was approved for the 2013-14 Operating Budget, bringing the total First 5 LA 2013/14 budget to \$212.1 million.

The program budget is a \$16.4 million decrease from the 2012/13 budget. The decrease comes because a number of grantees and contractors were awarded full funding during FY 2012/13 for future years' work and because several programs ended during the same year.

The 2013/14 Operating Budget is an increase of approximately \$1.1 million or 6 percent from the current fiscal year's budget. The increase is due to an increase in the cost of medical health benefits, a 2 percent cost of living increase, the creation of the new position of Chief Operating Officer and the addition of two staff positions in the Program Development Department.

211 Los Angeles County Funding Extended

The Commission unanimously voted to maintain First 5 LA's current level of funding and include matched funding to cover the total program cost for an additional year of up to \$582,607. This will allow 211 Los Angeles County to enhance 211's information and referral services by providing telephone-based developmental and behavioral screening to families with children ages 0-5 and connect them to needed early intervention services.

Highlights

- Fiscal Year 2013/14 Budget Authorized
- Commission Approves Legislative Agenda
- Best Start Regional Meetings Recap
- L3 Findings Are "Important" and "Promising"

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Sandra Figueroa-Villa

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

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Arturo Delgado, Ed.D.
Deanne Tilton



The decision will also allow 211 LA County to:

- Maintain its current service level of 3,000 children ages 0-5 screened per year
- Provide 211 LA County time to identify and secure other non-First 5 LA funding sources, as well as time to advocate for policy changes for long-term funding
- Allow First 5 LA staff to identify and implement strategies for program improvement

211 LA County will now be able to provide a phone-based developmental and behavioral screening for eligible families with children ages 0 to 5 and then connect them to the appropriate early intervention services. The screening tools used are the Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status and the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers.

The continuation of the 211 project supports First 5 LA's current Strategic Plan goal that children are ready for kindergarten and enhances earlier First 5 LA funding focusing on this area.


Commission Approves Legislative Agenda

On the recommendation of the Policy Department, the Commission unanimously authorized its support of First 5 LA's 2013 State Legislative Agenda, which includes California Assembly and Senate bills that target the following areas to improve the quality of life for children 0-5 and their families:

- Childhood Nutrition Training
- Child Care
- Early Care and Education
- State Preschool Programs
- Medi-Cal
- Cal-Fresh
- Social Services
- Breastfeeding

Meanwhile, the Commission adopted criteria for developing the annual legislative agenda, which requires, among other items, that the policy aligns with First 5 LA's Policy Agenda and its investments.

The approved criteria for evaluation of proposed legislation are as follows:

1. Alignment with Policy Agenda and Agency Investments
 2. Impact
 3. Value Add
 4. Feasibility
 5. Timeliness
 6. Prevention Approach
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The Commission also approved support to urge Congress to enact President Barack Obama's budget proposal to increase funding for preschool and early learning. First 5 LA engages in advocacy by meeting with elected officials, participating in coalitions, and writing letters of support from the agency.

Four New Agreements, 75 Renewals and 12 Amendments Approved

The Commission approved four new agreements and 75 renewals as part of the FY 2013/14 budget, as well as 12 proposed amendments from FY 2012/13 and FY 2013/14 budgets. The total amount authorized was \$89,694,800.

There are four new agreements for \$4,836,854 which include:

- Three from the Place-Based Investment area, two of which are part of the Welcome Baby/Universal Assessment of Newborns Welcome Baby investment area and one from the AmeriCorps/VISTA project - \$4,139,773
- One from the Research and Evaluation Investment Area for the Data Development – Los Angeles County Health Survey Project - \$697,081

There are 12 amendments for a total of \$752,308, which include:

- Two from the Countywide Investment Area for the Data Systems Integration/Welcome Baby & Select Home Visitation Project and the One Step Ahead Program - \$310,000
- One from the Place-Based Investment Area for additional funding for translation and interpreting services - \$50,000
- Six from the Prior Strategic Plan Investment Area which seek to amend contracts with the Baby Friendly Hospital Projects - \$343,673
- One from the Research and Evaluation Investment Area seeking to amend the contract with Harder+Company for the Healthy Births initiative evaluation - \$25,000
- Two from the Administration department which seek to extend contract periods and budgets for the L3 project consulting contracts (The Sandoval Group and Blue Garnet Associates) - \$23,635

There are 36 renewals for a total of \$45,906,475 from Countywide Investments, which include:

- Two from Public Affairs as part of the First 5 LA Public Education Program – \$2,442,000
- Seven from Program Development Department (two from the Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) Initiative, one Substance Abuse Treatment Services for High Risk Parents and Caregivers, one CARES Plus program, two ECE Workforce projects and one Reducing Early Childhood Obesity in Los Angeles County Project - \$34,372,841

Twenty two from the Policy Department which include:

- Fourteen from the Policy Advocacy Fund Cycle I Initiative - \$1,615,875
- Eight from the Communities Opportunities Fund Initiative - \$535,224

Five from the Grants Management Department which include:

- Two from Information Resource & Referral 211 - \$1,259,295
- Two from Black Infant Health - \$989,021
- One from Healthy Access/Healthy Kids - \$4,692,219

There are eight renewals for a total of \$11,486,200 from the Place-Based Investments category, which include:

- One Welcome Baby Pilot Project - \$2,422,957
- Six Welcome Baby/Universal Assessment of Newborns Welcome Baby Projects - \$8,248,424
- One Best Start LA Pilot Community Partnership Project - \$814,819

There are 23 renewals for a total of \$21,349,345 from the Prior Strategic Plan Investment Area, which include:

Two from the Program Development Department

- One for the Family Place Libraries Initiative - \$265,945
- One for the Oral Health and Nutrition Expansion and Enhancement Project/21st Century Community Dental Home Project - \$3,949,731

Twenty-one from the Grants Management Department

- Two Partnership for Families Projects - \$2,602,434
- Thirteen Family Literacy Projects - \$13,326,674
- Three Healthy Births Projects - \$533,751
- Three Early Head Start Matching Funds Projects - \$670,810

There are seven renewals for a total of \$4,135,200 from the Research and Evaluation Investment Area for the following projects:

- Building Capacity for Research and Data-Driven Decision Making - \$381,750
- School Readiness Data Reporting Infrastructure - \$83,650
- Los Angeles Mommy and Baby Project Survey - \$343,744
- Southern California Alliance for Learning and Results (SCALAR) - \$25,000
- Universal Preschool Child Outcomes Study (UPCOS) – Phase 7 - \$1,418,847
- Early Development Instrument - \$404,753
- Best Start Pilot Community Evaluation - \$1,477,456

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Kim Belshé discussed two key issues: The recent Best Start Communities Regional Meetings and Input from the “Listening” component of the L3 inquiry.

Best Start Regional Meetings Recap

In an effort to dig into the key overarching questions about the results, strategies and intermediate outcomes by which progress will be measured in Best Start, staff have gone out to each of the 14 Best Start communities for meetings of the senior leadership team with members of each of the 14 communities. Commissioner Sylvia S. Swilley, M.D., joined meetings in Long Beach and Wilmington, and Commissioner Duane Dennis joined the meeting with Metro LA.

Parents were the leading voices participating in these roundtable conversations, talking about the power of having a seat at the table and not just being a receiver of services. They also talked about how their knowledge of healthy childhood development has been increased, as well as their capabilities to support the emotional, social and cognitive development of their children. Staff heard a lot about contacts being made: parent to parent and also parent to service organization. Parents recognized the role that mobilized, advocating parents can play in terms of affecting change.

At the community level, staff was struck by the diversity of people sitting around the table. In addition to parents, there was leadership from the faith based, business, service provider and civic leader communities. They heard a lot about how First 5 LA's Best Start investments and efforts are not in isolation, but really trying to connect with other organizations' work, whether it be the California Endowment's in central Long Beach, the California Community Foundation's work in El Monte or the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative in Pacoima. There was clear recognition that community partnerships can be successful by leveraging and working with other efforts.


Staff also heard a lot about challenges, including concerns about the start-and-stop nature of First 5 LA's place-based initiatives to date. There was also a call for clear and consistent communications from First 5 LA about countywide investments and how they relate to place-based work, as well as questions about the status of community partnership plans submitted last April.

Staff also heard that developing place-based initiatives and relationships is time intensive and central to our ability to affect change. While there was frustration about what has been perceived as inaction over the past year, it was also very striking to hear about additional relationship building work that occurred – such as capacity building and trainings – that has solidified these partnerships.

Best Start leaders understood that what they were doing was potentially difficult to evaluate and measure impact, but it was something they really wanted to roll up their sleeves and be a part of.

Thematically, they heard about the importance of strengthening families, helping parents to be the best parents they could possibly be, the value of these community partnerships as a platform for parent engagement, parent training, parent mobilization, as well as communication across communities. And finally, the idea surfaced of network weaving, a realization that Best Start can act as a “glue” in their communities to help leverage and extend the reach of resources.

In terms of next steps, staff mentioned the Board retreat later this month, in which they hope to bring about a more focused framework for how to think of results for Best Start, both long term and intermediate, as well as indicators by which staff and the partnerships will measure progress. The



intent is to use feedback from that board retreat to inform individual discussions with the partnerships about their plans and priorities through the lens of a more focused, results-based framework.

L3 Report

The findings thus far through L3 are enormously important and promising, and the Executive Director views them through a very optimistic lens.

The L3 team reached out to a broad array of individuals including staff, deputies of County Supervisors, grantees, contractors and other external stakeholders through interviews, focus groups and a survey. A total of 306 engaged in our survey – 175 internal and 131 external, including organizations and individuals.

This is what was heard in terms of strategic issues and direction:


When contractors and grantees were asked to describe First 5 LA, a number of words popped up: The agency is clearly seen as a “funder,” a “leader” and “valuable,” but also seen as “bureaucratic” and “confused.” Words which also appeared that the Executive Director preferred to emphasize were “transitioning” and “potential.”


The single most important and consistent finding is that First 5 LA is seen as an organization that would really benefit from an increased strategic focus. That is really foundational to how the organization thinks about impact and role, and how the organization thinks of the programs and initiatives it supports and how they relate to one other.

While there was recognition that First 5 LA has made a contribution to broadening the awareness in Los Angeles County of the importance of the early years, there was also recognition of the potential for the Commission to have greater impact. Consistently, it was noted that First 5 LA had a strategic plan, as well as modifications to a strategic plan, but that the Commission’s work lacks a strategic focus that is important to an organization. The strategic plan was described by some as an “aspirational document,” lacking specificity and focus. There was not much consensus internally or externally about what role the Commission plays beyond that of being a funder. Several different roles were mentioned, including that of leader, catalyst, convener and trendsetter. The importance of bringing clarity to roles was a theme.

Given the number and diversity of initiatives and projects that First 5 LA supports, it is difficult to measure impact. As a result, impact is often articulated in terms of process, metrics or deliverables. Finally, there was acknowledgement and agreement that First 5 LA exists to serve all children of L.A. County, but Proposition 10 allows and this organization has utilized the ability to direct increased resources to certain populations in geographic areas that have greater needs.

In terms of program initiatives, it was acknowledged that First 5 LA engages in a significant level of activity that is making an important contribution, but those benefits are at the participant level as opposed to at a broader county-level impact. There is recognition that progress has been made with





some countywide initiatives, such as Welcome Baby and Home Visitation, but there was concern expressed that First 5 LA is trying to do too much or is overly ambitious.

There is awareness that many of the Commission's resources continue to support prior strategic plan priorities, some of which do not seem to be aligned with the current strategic plan's direction.

First 5 LA was acknowledged to have a very extensive network of external stakeholders, which is deemed an organizational strength. There is also a recognition that Commission staff is a very valuable resource in terms of their expertise and contributions within First 5 LA and countywide. The agency's relationship with L.A. County was viewed as mixed.


Staff learned that there is no clear and consistent definition of "partner" and that First 5 LA's reputation as a partner was a mixed bag. The Commission is sometimes seen as "rigid" in how it works with others. Overall, however, contractors and grantees were quite positive in how they viewed the user experiences with First 5 LA.

Internally, staff demonstrated a very strong support for First 5 LA's mission, and optimism for the organization and its future. Externally, it was noted that processes and procedures sometimes are not very consistent or clear and, in some cases, do not even exist.

In terms of leadership and governance, there was recognition of the importance the Commission plays as advocates for children 0-5. There were questions regarding the extent to which the Board uses the strategic plan and its goals that has been approved by the Board as a basis for decision making. There was also feedback that staff can do a better job of working with and informing the board. There is a shared responsibility and accountability between Board and staff regarding challenges and getting results we seek. Also, the annual rotation of Commission chair has the potential to contribute to discontinuity in leadership and changing priorities.

Across the diversity of perspectives, there is strong support for this organization: for the mission, focus and relevance of the work taking place. Also, a very strong desire that the organization succeed was expressed. There is recognition that much of the work accomplished has had a contribution: LAUP was cited for making an important contribution to the school readiness of young children. There is recognition that First 5 LA has an opportunity to have an even greater impact and that, as resources decline, it is going to force the organization to think more strategically about its role and focus and how to have the greatest impact possible for young children. Finally, the potential as the largest First 5 Commission to provide leadership in the statewide policy arena was noted.

Executive Director Belshé noted, "This is tough work, but one of the reasons I am optimistic is because of our effort to work very transparently to make sure we understand what we are doing well so we can build upon our strong infrastructure, but also where we are falling short. I think we will become a stronger organization because of the result of candid feedback. The first step an organization needs to take to improve and accelerate its impact is to understand what it does well and what it can build upon and improve."



In other actions

- The Commission agreed to table for one month an agreement to approve funding for LAUP for Fiscal Year 2013/14.
- Commission Chair Mark Ridley-Thomas noted that Commissioner Dennis is now a voting member representing the 2nd Supervisorial District pursuant to the action of the Board of Supervisors.
- The Commission received and filed the 2011-12 Annual Report from First 5 California and the Annual Review of First 5 LA's Strategic Plan.

The First 5 LA Board of Commissioners is comprised of 17 members (nine voting, four ex-officio, four alternates). The board includes voting members appointed by each of the Los Angeles County supervisors and the L.A. County departments of Children and Family Services, Public Health and Mental Health. The Chairman of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors also serves as Chairman of the First 5 LA Commission.

The 17-member Board also includes representatives from other educational, children and families organizations throughout the county. The Board of Commissioners meets on the second Thursday of each month at 1:30 p.m. unless otherwise indicated at the First 5 LA offices. All meetings are open to the public and agendas are posted [here](#) at least 72 hours in advance.