SUMMARY POSITION DESCRIPTION

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FIRST 5 LA

The Challenge and the Opportunity

First 5 LA is a unique public/private initiative dedicated to improving the development of children from the pre-natal stage through age five. Created in 1998 pursuant to State voter approval of Proposition 10 – the California Children and Families First Initiative – it is the chosen instrument for achieving the Proposition’s comprehensive child and family development goals in Los Angeles County, the largest and most diverse county in America. As such, First 5 LA operates at the true frontier of early childhood development where the nation’s capacity to meet the needs of children in their most critical developmental years will be most clearly and definitively tested. Leading the organization’s response to this challenge is the premier early childhood development leadership opportunity in the country.

The core values served by First 5 LA are strengthening the voice of families and the resources available to them; building the capacity of communities to support families; focusing on results and the metrics which document them; dedication to learning, innovation and adaptation to lessons learned; and vigorous advocacy and building of public support for policies that benefit expectant parents, young children and their families. Toward these ends the organization operates as a community partner, building and complementing the efforts of others; as a leader and trendsetter, identifying, funding and replicating innovations and proven solutions, and bringing these solutions to scale; as a change agent, mobilizing the broader community behind the interests of expectant parents and young children and their families; as a convenor/facilitator bringing together individuals and organization with common goals; and as a catalyst, promoting the sustainability of effective programs.

The four overarching goals in the organization’s current Strategic Plan are that children are born healthy; that they maintain a healthy weight; that they are safe from abuse and neglect; and that they are ready for kindergarten. Progress metrics have been established and are monitored for each goal. The numerous First 5 LA intervention strategies are of two basic types. The first addresses problems and solutions of countywide scope (in County with a population of almost 10 million, of whom most live in 88 cities, but more than 1 million live in unincorporated areas), and include such elements as public education, data systems integration, and workforce development. The other type of strategy addresses localized, place-specific problems with tailored interventions of many kinds. All strategies are based on best practices, evidence-based theories of change, and lessons learned through operating experience, and great care is taken to realize opportunities to multiply impact through leveraging partnerships with other entities pursuing similar goals.

Countywide interventions have spanned a broad topical spectrum, from a comprehensive, long-term School Readiness Initiative which integrated existing early childhood programs with health and other social services and parental support; to partial underwriting of children’s health insurance; to support of baby-friendly hospitals and family place libraries; to comprehensive resource mobilization supported by community reinvestment expertise and institutional support; to promotion and protection of oral health; to development and advocacy of a full agenda of legislative and other policy positions and proposals. Place-based interventions have centered on development of a Best Start program to empower stakeholders in each of 14 selected communities within the County to work
together to build upon existing services, programs and resources in a concerted effort to achieve First 5 LA’s overarching goals in each location.

First 5 LA is funded by Los Angeles County’s share of the annual proceeds of a 50-cents-per-pack State tax on cigarettes and additional tobacco taxes levied by Proposition 10. In FY2011 this generated $145 million in revenue. Through the end of its last completed fiscal year, First 5 LA had invested or allocated more than $1.2 billion through grants and direct expenditures since 1999, and had net assets in excess of $800 million. The organization is governed by a 13-member Board of Commissioners, which is always chaired by the sitting Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors (a position which rotates among the Supervisors every year). Five Commissioners are private citizens appointed by each of the five County Supervisors. Three others are the Directors of the County Departments of Public Health, Mental Health, and Children & Family Services, respectively. The remaining four are ex-officio representatives of the County Office of Education, the Policy Roundtable for Child Care, the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the County Commission for Children and Families. The organization has statutory status as a public agency, but it is operationally independent of County government.

Responsibilities of the Appointee

The Executive Director is the leader and public face of the organization. With the policy guidance of the Board of Commissioners, and working with a senior management team, the Executive Director has chief executive authority and accountability for all aspects of First 5 LA operations, and for integrating them all in support of the organization’s mission. Specifically, he/she:

- Serves as the chief steward and spokesperson with respect to the First 5 LA mission and core values.
- Develops and recommends for Board of Commissioners approval the long- and short-term goals to be pursued, together with basic strategies for achieving them and milestones for measuring progress.
- Oversees and is ultimately accountable for effective implementation of the strategies selected and, insofar as uncontrollable external forces permit, for achievement of the goals and objectives established by the Board.
- Performs the other executive leadership and oversight functions associated with effective and efficient operation of an organization carrying on a complex array of activities involving hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars.
- Listens to the concerns of community representatives and service providers, and enlists them as collaborators in a common effort on behalf of expectant parents, young children and their families.
- Represents First 5 LA to relevant stakeholders and constituencies -- County and community leaders, neighborhood councils, officials at all three levels of government, business and labor leaders, expert academics and practitioners, and others.
- Inspires, motivates, nurtures, and where necessary renews the organization's supply of skilled staff who are indispensable to organizational success.

Qualifications

The capacity most needed in the Executive Director is the ability to lead -- the combination of vision, will and talent that can spearhead a sustained effort to mobilize the immense human and material resources present in the County behind a comprehensive, inclusive campaign to make First 5 LA the nation’s premier source of results and proven best practices for improving the lot of expectant parents, young children and their families. Within this overall leadership capability, the Executive Director should have as many as possible of the following characteristics and capacities:

- Passionate commitment to the First 5 LA mission and to the well being of the children and families it was created to serve.

- The vision, strategic thinking capability, and creativity to form and propose for Board approval a bold and internally consistent program of grantmaking and operational partnerships which can accomplish significant, measurable improvements in the health, safety, and school readiness of children throughout the target age range.

- Extended and successful experience at working in a complex cultural and governance environment, exhibiting the discipline, perseverance, listening capacity, resilience and familiarity with political and organizational dynamics necessary to build and maintain forward progress amid shifting currents of stakeholder opinion and priorities.

- A solid track record of effective management of a large, complex organization, demonstrating the ability to assemble and motivate a strong, diverse management team suited to the demands of such an organization, and to hold team members to high standards of accountability. Experience in southern California, or California more generally, is a plus but not a requirement.

- Recognized professional stature in one or, even better, more than one of the human development specialties involved in the organization’s comprehensive approach to the well-being of young children. An advanced degree is preferred, but equivalent experience will also be considered.

- Sufficient understanding of the relevant public policy issues and the policy making process to be a credible formulator and inspiring advocate of a comprehensive policy agenda addressed to a broad range of actions and governmental levels.

- Unusually strong intellectual curiosity, an eclectic taste for learning, and demonstrated ability to quickly absorb new knowledge to the level necessary to exert effective oversight, delegation and critical faculty in subject areas that are largely new to him/her.

- Demonstrated problem solving capacity and receptivity to promising new approaches, skill at programmatic entrepreneurship, and recognition of the impact enhancement which can often be achieved by leaving it to others to take most or all of the credit for successes.
- An exceptionally keen intellect, together with the self-knowledge, personal security and ego control necessary to deal effectively with strong institutions and personalities, to complement him/herself with very able co-workers, and to identify his/her personal success with the success of the organization.

- Highly advanced communication and other interpersonal skills, together with acute cultural sensitivities and deep familiarity with the issues that face disadvantaged families in large, culturally diverse urban areas.

- The demonstrated ability to oversee and manage financial and other resources effectively and accountably, to allocate resources equitably among competing needs and constituencies, and to maximize the impact of expenditures on improving ground level realities.

- Deep commitment to the principle that community leaders and their constituents are equal and accountable partners in improving the lives of young children and their families, and that their views and priorities must be solicited and respected.

- Rock solid personal integrity, as demonstrated throughout his/her career. Demonstrated effectiveness at working with a Board is a plus.

- Inspiring and engaging, with an easy, open manner.

Eligibility for Appointment

First 5 LA engages employees without regard to race, color, religion, creed, age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation. All who believe they meet the stated qualifications are invited to apply.

Compensation Package

The appointee will receive a base annual salary in the range of $200-250,000, as well as a generous program of fringe benefits.

Timing of Appointment

Initial consideration of candidates will begin in the latter part of May 2012. The appointee will be selected as soon thereafter as possible, and will take office at the earliest feasible date.

To apply or for further information, please contact:

Edward K. Hamilton, Chairman
Hamilton, Rabinovitz & Associates, Inc.
26384 Carmel Rancho Lane, Ste. 202
Carmel, California 93923
(831) 622-4400 (voice); (831) 626-1351 (fax);
HRASearch@AOL.Com