

Summary of Commission Actions



Champions For Our Children
www.First5LA.org

Meeting of March 14, 2013

Interim Support for *Best Start* Communities Authorized

The Commission concurred with staff's recommendation to continue existing support for communications, community partnerships and evaluation and invest in targeted activity to strengthen community capacity building (i.e., assessment and community-based action research) for First 5 LA's place-based investment effort, *Best Start*. Support totaling \$2.1 million (\$150,000/community available from an existing allocation) was extended for 6 months and staff was authorized to execute contracts to support this work beginning in April 2013.

Background

Since July 2010, First 5 LA staff has supported the establishment of parent/resident-led partnerships that include diverse community members and stakeholders. These partnerships are charged with ensuring that *Best Start* implementation in each of the 14 communities reflects the community's strengths and interests, efforts are coordinated, and duplication and conflict within the community are reduced.

To date, more than 5,000 individuals have participated in *Best Start* Partnership activities, representing parents/residents, Neighborhood Action Councils, and entities such as businesses, community and faith-based organizations, schools, and county agencies.

From the implementation of *Best Start* in July 2010 to January 31, 2013, First 5 LA has invested \$ 9.7 million to support Best Start implementation activities associated with communications, partnership support, evaluation, and community capacity building. In addition, \$ 6.7 million has supported First 5 LA's *Best Start* Department's operations. This investment represents 5% of the Commission's total investment for the same time period.

Highlights

- Interim support for Best Start Communities approved
- \$17 million in key grants extended
- L3 Exploration Update

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From July 2010 to June 2012, community efforts were directed towards achieving two major milestones: to establish formal community partnerships, and develop community plans that reflect community identified priorities and projects to improve outcomes for young children. *Best Start* partnerships submitted their draft community plans to Commission staff in June 2012. That summer, the Commission directed staff to further define desired outcomes, refine priorities and identify measures and tools to track progress associated with *Best Start*.

Pending further staff activity consistent with Board direction in the Summer of 2012, the Board approved funding in July 2012 to continue First 5 LA support for three components of the community plans: communications, partnership support and evaluation. That support was extended in November 2012 and was scheduled to end on March 31st, 2013.

On March 4, 2013, the Commission kicked off the first of a series of special meetings to review and assess the Best Start initiative with the goal of achieving greater clarity regarding its goals, strategies, intermediate outcomes, and resource requirements. Pending these focused discussions on *Best Start* implementation, staff proposed two options for providing interim support of the 14 Best Start communities. The goals of the interim support are to:

- Provide six months of interim community support pending Board review and assessment of *Best Start* implementation
- Maintain community engagement in activity underway in *Best Start* communities
- Continue strengthening community partnerships
- Strengthen capacity of communities in the four core areas of community engagement, community leadership, community infrastructure and community investment

The two options that staff submitted for Board consideration reflect some or all of the four proposed areas of work. The options are described below along with their budgetary impact.

OPTION 1: Maintain Status Quo

Option 1 provides continued funding for Communications, Partnership Support (i.e., trainings/workshops and logistics); and Evaluation for 6 months. The total amount requested under this Option for six months totals \$1.2 million or \$85,000 per community. There are sufficient funds available from the \$ 280,000 per community allocation approved by the Commission in July 2012 to continue support for these activities.

OPTION 2: Targeted Community Capacity Investment

Option 2 builds upon Option 1, but takes First 5 LA support a step further by providing resources to complete a Community Capacity Building Assessment and implement Community-Based Action Research (CBAR). The total amount requested under Option 2 for 6 months totals \$2.1 million or

\$150,000 per community. There are sufficient funds available from the \$280,000 per community allocation approved by the Commission in July 2012 to support these activities.

A spirited discussion followed during which Commissioners discussed opportunities to leverage Best Start community engagement to help connect residents with new coverage options that will be available under federal health reform beginning in January 2014. Commissioners also discussed the importance of differentiating between the 14 Best Start communities and their varied stages of evolution. After concluding their discussion, the Commission approved staff-recommended option 2 by a 6-3 vote.

Key Grants and Programs Extended to Maintain Important Services

The Commission approved continued support totaling \$17,250,856 for 38 grantees supported via five separate programs – Partnerships for Families, Healthy Births, School Readiness, Family Literacy and Neighborhood Action Councils (NACs). These extensions were considered as part of the Board’s review of a larger group of First 5 LA funded grants scheduled to end on June 30, 2013. The Commission agreed with the staff recommendation to end funding for 13 grants (6 School Readiness, 7 Family Literacy) set to expire on June 30, and to review options for continued support for 3 SRI grantees which are using First 5 LA funds to leverage federal Early Head Start funding.

Decision-Making Framework

A framework was developed to analyze all expiring contracts and grants. The framework first considered whether an investment is time-limited. For all First 5 LA funded projects that were time-limited or one-time investments, contracts would end on or before June 30, 2013. Next, the framework asked if there was a sustainability plan for the initiative. Partnerships for Families (PFF) investments did have a likely sustainability plan tied to the County’s Department of Children and Family Services’ receipt of federal title IV-E Waiver funding. For initiatives that did not have a sustainability plan, the framework asked whether the initiative is potentially tied to *Best Start* implementation. Four investments – Healthy Births, School Readiness, Family Literacy and the Neighborhood Action Councils (NACs) – were identified as potentially tied to *Best Start* implementation. Evaluation findings related to impact and cost were also a consideration and informed staff recommendations.

Generally, each program demonstrated positive outcomes (with the exception of School Readiness), but the evaluations provided some overall findings:

- The initiatives were originally created as pilots and at this point during their implementation, with the exception of PFF, there is no plan to scale up and sustain the programs.

- The FY 12-13 cost per child and family, on average, is equivalent to or lower than programs implementing similar strategies.
- A strong relationship exists between levels of participant engagement (dosage), program quality and positive outcomes.
- For all of the initiatives described here, improvements in outcomes were seen at the program participant level. There was no evidence that improvements occurred at the community or at the county level for the measures of interest.

Recommendations for funding or concluding grants for each program area were approved by the Commission as presented by staff with the following staff-recommended amendments:

- Healthy Births – Funding for these grantees were extended for 6 months or until *Best Start* Welcome Baby or Select Home Visitation is implemented in those communities, whichever is longer.
- School Readiness Initiative (SRI) – Staff was instructed to work with 3 additional SRI grantees that are using funding through SRI to implement the Federal Early Head Start program, to explore and develop options for one-year support via First 5 LA's resource mobilization opportunities. Staff will present a recommendation to the Commission at the April 11th meeting.

Informed by the decision-making framework, the original staff recommendations are shown below:

1. Partnerships for Families: Extend funding for 9 lead agencies and respective collaboratives for 12 months in the amount of \$10,687,168 to align with DCFS' title IV-E waiver notification and an anticipated contracting date of July 1, 2014. The federal title IV-E waiver negotiations are expected to conclude in FY13-14.
2. Healthy Births: Extend funding in the amount of \$2,226,050 to maintain the infrastructure built by the Best Babies Collaboratives (BBCs) until Family Strengthening programs roll-out. A 12-month extension for the Antelope Valley BBC and the Los Angeles Best Babies Network (LABBN). A 6-month extension for the remaining 6 BBCs.
3. School Readiness: Extend funding in the amount of \$1,245,918 for 8 grantees (seven 6-month extensions and one 12-month extension) in order to preserve infrastructure for those grantees that provide the Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visitation program and currently provide services in a *Best Start* community that has chosen PAT as their Best Start Communities' home visitation model. The remaining 9 School Readiness grants will end on June 30, 2013.

4. Family Literacy: Extend funding for 12 grants and one technical assistance contract for 12 months in the amount of \$1,631,720 in order to preserve infrastructure for those grantees that are in or serving a Best Start Community. Grants to 7 other providers that are not in or serving a Best Start community will end as of June 30, 2013.

5. Neighborhood Action Councils: Provisionally continue support of the NACs at their current level of funding (\$1,460,000) in anticipation of resident-based organizing as a component of *Best Start* implementation. Final recommended level of funding, scale and scope to be determined based on the Board's review of Best Start.

Authorized Items – New Contracts, Contract Renewals and/or Amendments to Existing Contracts

The following items totaling \$2,656,740 were authorized by the Commission (all amounts are for FY 2012-13 and all are new agreements unless indicated otherwise.)

- **Children are Born Healthy, Maintain a Healthy Weight, are Ready for Kindergarten and are Safe from Abuse and Neglect**
 - Policy Advocacy Fund – Cycle II. (These investments reflect First 5 LA's recognition that public policy is a critical strategy to achieve large scale and sustained change in the lives of children, families and communities. The work of PAF grantees aligns with multiple strategic goal areas)
 - California Child Care Res. and Referral Network - \$146,805
 - Child Care Law Center - \$138,085
 - Children Now - \$208,806
 - CHIRLA - \$147,296
 - Community Coalition for Subst. Abuse Prevention & Treatment - \$227,435
 - Friends of the Family - \$221,610
 - Maternal Child Health Access - \$215,000
 - Special Needs Network - \$152,220
 - Visión y Compromiso - \$248,946
 - Western Center on Law and Poverty - \$116,252
 - State Policy and Sustainability Consultant
 - California Strategies and Advocacy, LLC – \$124,000
- **Other Investments – \$39,999**
 - Phone System Replacement
 - PC Connection - \$129,984
 - Microsoft Sharepoint Project
 - ShareSquared - \$269,872
 - Children's Dental Care Program
 - Barbara Aved Associates - \$57,390

- Oral Health and Nutrition
 - St. John Well Child and Family Center - \$253,039

*Indicates contract amendment or renewal. Amount indicated is only amended amount, not new total contract amount. (Contract amendments that are less than \$25,000 but cause the total contract amount to increase beyond \$25,000 will be listed for Board consideration.)

Program Budget Adjustments Approved

- The Commission approved a resolution authorizing a change to increase the Policy Advocacy Fund line item in the FY 2012-13 Program Budget by \$500,000. Funds will be used to support policy and advocacy grantees working to advance First 5 LA's public policy agenda. The resolution also provides for an increase in the Data Systems Integration Countywide Strategy line item in the FY 2012-13 Program Budget by \$85,000. These funds will be used to implement an enterprise and departmental intranet. Additional contract authority of \$320,112 was also approved to accommodate the 10 new Policy Advocacy Fund grantees.

Executive Director's Report

L3 Initiative

The Executive Director presented an update on the "Listening, Learning and Leading" (L3) exploratory process. L3 is a focused, collaborative, and time-bound exploration centered on how First 5 LA can most effectively advance its mission and achieve better outcomes for young children. More specifically, the assessment and review is intended to:

- Build a common understanding among staff and Commissioners of the status of implementation of First 5 LA's strategic plan for 2009-15.
- Identify critical implementation issues that require Board of Commissioner understanding, consideration, and decision-making.
- Highlight opportunities to strengthen First 5 LA's internal capacity and external partnerships to advance organizational goals.
- Provide a roadmap for clarifying First 5 LA's strategic direction, making any needed mid-course adjustments, and achieving greater impact in the context of the long-term financial projections.

Over the past month, L3 engagement activities have principally focused on engaging internal stakeholders, including staff of First 5 LA and members of the Board of Commissioners. A recently completed staff survey focused on progress with implementation of the Strategic Plan, implementation experience and organizational performance, and First 5 LA impact. Ninety-six percent of First 5 LA staff completed the survey. These findings will be synthesized and used to

inform broader L3 inquiries and to identify more focused staff discussions via focus groups. L3 will soon be reaching out to all current and former contractors and grantees, to solicit their feedback in three areas: (1) interactions with First 5 LA staff; (2) First 5 LA business practices, policies and procedures; and (3) implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2009-15, as modified.

Other Actions

The Commission also took the following actions:

- The Commission approved the minutes of the February 14, 2013 meeting and the agency's financial statements for the month of January 2013

Continued Items

The following items were continued for discussion at a future Commission meeting:

- Item 9 – Strategic Plan Implementation Profile – Countywide Strategies: Policy Implementation Update and Key Board Considerations
- Item 10 – Approve Contract Extensions for up to six months, for seven (7) Baby Friendly Hospital Project Cycle One hospitals in a total amount not to exceed \$500,000
- Item 11 – Approval of Contract Modification – DCFS Eligibility Workers for Homeless Families
- Item 13 – Evaluation Proposal—Countywide Systems Improvement Comprehensive Evaluation 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.