



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2022-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

First 5's research consistently shows that factors predicting kindergarten readiness are closely associated with socioeconomic conditions rooted in structural racism, classism, and public disinvestment in neighborhoods with primarily Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents. **Building an equity-centered early childhood system that centers a "whole community, whole family, whole child" approach to improve kindergarten readiness is essential to the current and future overall health of Alameda County.**

First 5 Alameda County's work is to *fund, partner, administer, and advocate* to ensure families have what they need every step of the way along the "Road to Kindergarten Readiness." With the influx of new local resources and the leveraging of federal and state resources, this moment represents a rare and invaluable opportunity for our agency to evolve our local early childhood system that is responsive to the county's children, families, and communities.

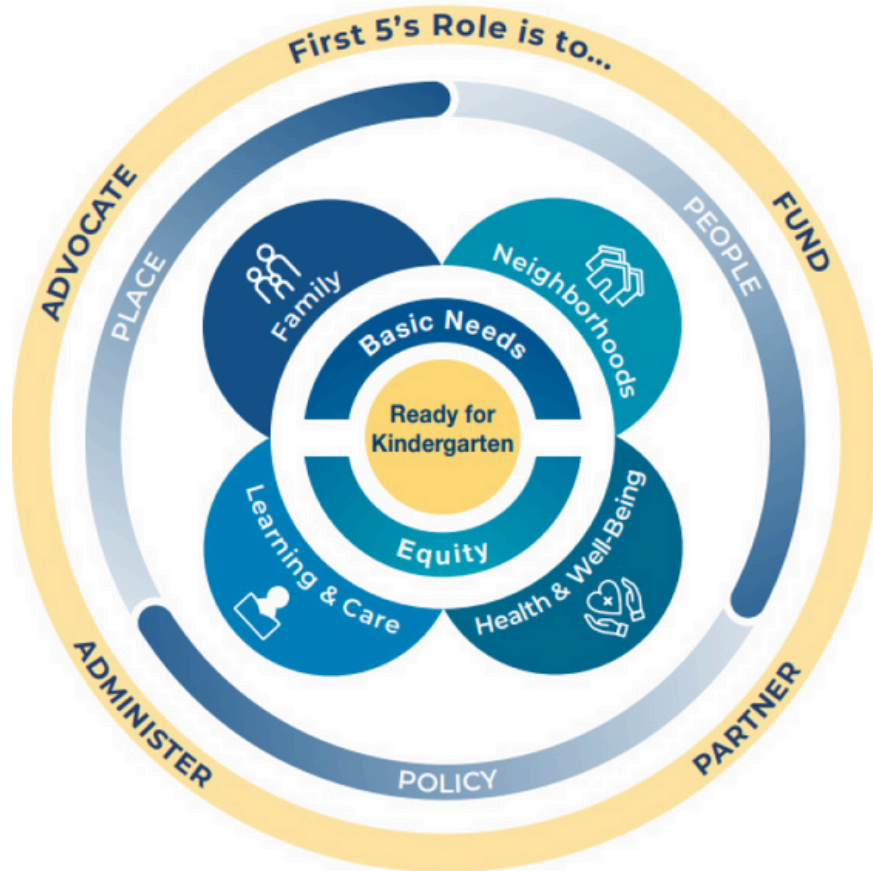
"There is no going back to a normal that did not work for so many. We do not need a recovery but a reimagination, restructuring, and renewal that challenges inequality and lifts up commonality."

- Dr. Manuel Pastor,
speaking to First 5 Alameda County
All-Staff meeting, March 9, 2023

Sections Overview

- INVESTING IN TRANSFORMATIVE SYSTEMS BUILDING
- OPERATIONALIZING EQUITY
- EVOLVING TO MORE COMMUNITY-CENTERED PROGRAMMING
- KINDERGARTEN READINESS REQUIRES SYSTEMS CHANGE
- OUR EQUITY STATEMENT

Working to expand community and family-centered programming through increased investments, we are proud of what First 5 Alameda County accomplished in its second year of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan implementation. **Our investments continue to deliver high-quality results, reaching 25,000 people last year alone, including 19,000+ children, 11,000+ parents/caregivers, and 4,500+ providers.**



We are operating at a time when the challenges, complexities, demands, and opportunities for systems change are immense. We are on the heels of a global pandemic; people are still struggling, while state and federal relief is expiring. California is facing a budget deficit threatening planned investments in a set of initiatives to redesign its social safety net, including [Universal Pre-Kindergarten \(UPK\)](#), [California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal \(CalAIM\)](#), and the [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative - California Health and Human Services \(CYBHI\)](#).

“Children are not innately ready or not ready for kindergarten. They thrive when they grow and develop in environments that support and nurture them and their families. This requires community conditions that position families for success—well-paying jobs, access to quality, affordable early care and education, transportation, health care, and safe, inviting places to live, play, and connect. It also requires freedom from discrimination rooted in racism and classism.”

- First 5 Alameda County Kindergarten Readiness Assessment 21-22

Locally, Alameda County residents made significant investments in children and families that are now coming to fruition. **First 5's roles in two local ballot measures—as contracted implementation partner for the Oakland Children's Initiative (Measure AA) and named administrator of The Children's Health and Child Care Initiative for Alameda County (Measure C, currently in litigation)—will grow our agency's annual revenue from \$24 million to approximately \$200 million annually, an eight-fold increase.**

This funding is coming to First 5 to leverage our expertise, infrastructure, and investments in Place, People, and Policy, allowing us to scale the past 25 years of our work to build and evolve the early childhood system. Given this, the drivers of our accomplishments and agency growth in this strategic plan update are:

1. INVESTING IN TRANSFORMATIVE SYSTEM BUILDING

- **Continued to build and scale the local early childhood system with new revenue.** Our fiscal outlook is strong given new funds, coupled with a clean audit and a balanced budget. While First 5 Alameda County will be experiencing significant growth in the coming year, all other First 5 agencies around the state have declining revenues and are facing layoffs and program cuts. Our colleagues throughout California, and beyond, are looking to us as a model for leveraging funding, policy advocacy, and equity-centered systems building as they manage challenging local circumstances.

At the local, state, and federal level in FY 2023-2024, we received:

<p>\$1.6M</p> <p>from the Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA)</p>	<p>\$1.6M</p> <p>annual allocation from Alameda Alliance for Health (AAH)</p>	<p>\$2.5M</p> <p>annual allocation for Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA)</p>	<p>\$2.2M</p> <p>from multi-year grants from philanthropy and Child Family & Community Services (CFCS)</p>	<p>\$9.6M</p> <p>annual allocation of multi-year grants from philanthropy</p>	<p>\$24.5M</p> <p>received from Child, Family & Community Services (CFCS)</p>
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- **Adopted the Early Development Instrument (EDI) as the new Kindergarten Readiness Community Study tool.** The EDI is a comprehensive tool that provides valuable insights into the conditions that support family well-being and child development. The information collected through parents/caregivers and educators will provide data down to the census tract on community conditions and will inform policy decisions and investments. The adoption of the EDI was a collaborative decision made by all school districts involved in the Countywide Kindergarten Readiness Tool Decision-Making Series, a sequence of meetings that was co-chaired by Alameda County Superintendent Alysse Castro and First 5 Alameda County CEO Kristin Spanos and included school districts representatives and labor representation. The series culminated in the unanimous decision to adopt the EDI as the tool for future Kindergarten Readiness Community Studies. We believe that the EDI will serve as a critical component in our efforts to improve local systems and conditions that support children 0-5 and their families.

- **Created a Pediatric Care Coordination Division, secured philanthropic funds to hire a director to oversee that division, and expanded our Pediatric Care Coordination staffing and capacity to reach more Alameda County children and families.** We renewed funding for our Help Me Grow and DULCE programs and collaborated with local partners, including our local Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan (Alameda Alliance for Health), Alameda Health System, and the Stupski Foundation to identify additional funding sources to sustain and scale these vital programs. This work successfully increased our Alameda Alliance for Health grant award from \$572,473 in fiscal year 2021-2022 to \$1.59 million in fiscal year 2023-2024, an increase of \$1 million.

- **Continued to expand and began evaluation of the Early Education Apprenticeship Program.** This program is an “earn and learn model” that covers tuition and permit fees for early care educators, while providing on-the-job training, as well as stipends and additional supports like tutoring and child care. It is an exemplary model of a public-private partnership as the program is jointly funded by the Alameda County Social Services Agency, First 5 Alameda County, and Tipping Point Community, and the type of public policy infrastructure necessary to support the continued growth in our local early care and education delivery system.

- **Continued to offer training to providers.** First 5 disseminates best practices to professionals working with young children in mental health, early education, health, family support, and administration. In FY 2022-2023, we provided more than 50 trainings and learning opportunities for parents, caregivers, providers, and professionals in the ECE field, and we distributed \$288,430 in professional development and training stipends to ECE professionals and caregivers participating in First 5's Quality Counts program.

- **Continued to fund Project DULCE** at Highland Hospital. Families enrolled in the program receive enhanced support in which a family specialist in the pediatric setting supports connection of the families to needed resources, including legal support. More than 160 families were enrolled and received support in FY 2022-2023

2. OPERATIONALIZING EQUITY: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CAPACITY

- **Restructured the agency and conducted hiring to build the staff capacity and infrastructure needed to administer substantial new public funds.** Spurred by the Oakland Children's Initiative and Measure C, we have been proactively building an organization prepared to manage the significant system-building legislatively mandated by these new public resources. Since fiscal year 2022-2023, we added 34 new positions in various areas throughout the agency, including programs, operations, finance, compliance, technology, data and evaluation, planning, communications, and government affairs and policy. The hiring and structural changes will continue into 2024 and beyond, as we enter a 3-to-5-year building phase. We seek to retain and recruit a workforce that reflects the diversity and cultural fabric of Alameda County, support staff development and professional growth, ensure regulatory compliance, and effectively implement existing and new initiatives.
- **Continued centering equity in our programming, investments, advocacy and intentionally engaging in dialogue regarding organizational culture.** First 5 has used equity to inform our work since our founding in 1998. Over the years, we have intentionally built upon and strengthened this commitment, including in our 2017-2022 and 2022-2027 strategic plans. As part of our evolution, in fiscal year 2022-2023, we engaged in a participatory agencywide learning and development process to update our equity statement to encompass our current work, intentions for continuous learning and improvement, and commitment to accountability. In fiscal year 2023-2024, our agency took an important step in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by engaging in all-staff trainings on unconscious bias. The trainings, led by Dr. Sacha Joseph-Mathews, Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer at Stanislaus State University, equipped employees with fundamental knowledge, tools, and resources to identify, address, and minimize unconscious bias in their dealings with fellow team members and stakeholders.
- **Ensuring that our governing body represents our commitment to community-directed investments by appointing a representative of a parent/community-based building group as a First 5 Commissioner.**

3. EVOLVING TO MORE COMMUNITY-CENTERED PROGRAMMING

➤ Launched key programmatic and community investments, including:

- A new division of Pediatric Care Coordination encompassing our existing family serving programs out of pediatric health settings, including Help Me Grow's developmental screening, outreach, referral, and navigation and the DULCE's model health, resource, and legal supports
- A strategic parent partnership program focused on supporting Black mothers and birthing people and investing in community-based strategies to disrupt inequities and disparities in birth outcomes with a focus on lactation supports for Black birthing people

➤ Reached key programmatic and community investment milestones, including:

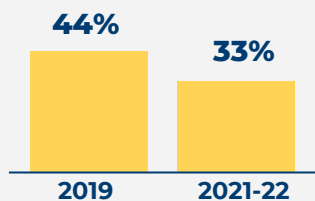
- Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) initiative grantees engaged in a year-long facilitated strategic planning process with Cities and People Advisors to identify each site's community-directed multi-year priorities and develop strategic work plans and data profiles to implement their priorities. This process also fostered alignment with Oakland Thrives' Rise East Initiative, a place-based investment that is on the precipice of receiving more than \$100 million from philanthropic partners. Proudly, First 5's NRFS investment was part of the foundation that made the Rise East investment by philanthropy possible.
- Alameda County Father Corps 10-Year Evaluation. The evaluation details the history and evolution of the program since its inception in 2013, and the impacts on fathers and father figures, service providers, and system leaders who are connected to the Fathers Corps. As well as recommendations and innovation opportunities for each of the target audiences to improve access, outcomes, and systems change. The evaluation will help the agency continue improving and evolving the program to better serve fathers and father figures and share lessons learned with other agencies who wish to implement fatherhood initiatives.
- Fatherhood Summit. Hosted more than 400 fathers and father figures in a free all-day event, where they engaged in workshops, activities, and trainings and connected to community resources and employment opportunities.

These and other achievements, plus additional contributing factors over the past year, set the stage for the next phase of First 5's 2022-27 strategic plan implementation. The new local revenue and scaling of programs, by tapping into federal and state allocations, afford an opportunity to reimagine a more equitable early childhood system. In doing so, our lessons learned and local success could very well serve as a model and an example for state and federal policies that recognize and invest in child care and the labor of providers as the public good that they are; and they will be the subject of a forthcoming case study by Stanford University's Center on Early Childhood.

First 5 Alameda County is well positioned to serve as the steward of public funds, leveraging diverse funding streams, partnership with community, parents, and providers, and our central role to help create a more cohesive and equity-centered "whole community, whole family, whole child" early childhood system.

Kindergarten Readiness Requires Systems Change

The 2021-22 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) findings illustrate the need for investment in the early childhood system and policy advocacy for structural changes. For more on the conditions facing communities, families, and children, see Alameda County's Context: Data for Action in the full Strategic Plan (page 11) or our [Data for Action tool](#), and First 5's investments in Appendix A, page 45 of the full Strategic Plan.



According to parents/ caregivers, 33% of children were fully ready for kindergarten compared to 44% in 2019. Structural inequities compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted children, families, and communities.

Key KRA Findings:

- Families reported needing **activities for young children and child care** as their highest priority support.
- **Family income** was strongly related to readiness.
- 65% of families indicated that **help connecting to resources** was important to them; only 12% of all families had received this kind of assistance.
- Lower-income families, families living in lower-income neighborhoods, Black or Hispanic/Latino families, and monolingual Spanish-speaking families were more likely to say **community supports** are needed.
- Children who attended **well-child visits** had higher readiness. In addition, children whose parents/caregivers reported fewer concerns about their child's mental health also had higher readiness.
- Use of **kindergarten transition supports**, especially among fathers, was linked to higher readiness.
- 88% of kindergarten teachers reported feeling stressed. Educators who reported high levels of stress were over four times more likely to say they plan to leave the profession.
- Early care and education (ECE) professionals experienced the greatest changes to their hours and income during COVID-19: 49% reported decreased hours, 43% decreased wages, and 57% decreased household income.



OUR EQUITY STATEMENT

First 5 Alameda County is committed to being an equity-centered, anti-racist, and anti-classist organization. We recognize that we operate in a racialized economic system characterized by extractive and exploitative labor practices and public policies perpetuating long-standing disparate life outcomes. To this end, we use anti-racist and equity-based practices to invest in and support children, families, and neighborhoods. Our Place, People, Policy framework intentionally prioritizes our investments in communities that have experienced historic and systemic racism and disinvestment. As a part of this commitment, we use our resources to redress (to set right) these injustices by:

- **Celebrating Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)** cultures and honoring their assets, values, and needs by ensuring investments, programs, data, and policy work is directed by and reflects the richness and needs of these communities.
- **Prioritizing the needs of low-to-moderate-income families** and neighborhoods with historical disinvestment.
- **Addressing root causes** through the administration of public funds, advocacy, and operationalization of public policy.
- **Interrupting inequities** that impact the conditions needed for kindergarten readiness.
- Ensuring that our investments, policies, practices, and agency culture are **aligned with our equity principles**.

We acknowledge that our unconscious and conscious bias impacts our practices. Therefore, we are committed to deepening our understanding of how power, wealth, and opportunity imbalances appear in policies, communities, organizations, and interpersonal relationships. We can only do this as lifelong learners with a growth mindset focused on transformative change.

We commit to continuous improvement and to hold ourselves accountable to operationalize this statement and our principles.

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