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CASE STUDIES EXPLORING THE FINANCING AND SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL, MULTI-SECTOR SYSTEMS SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Introduction

Many policymakers, program managers and community leaders believe multi-sector, place-based initiatives are the most promising to address social determinants of health. These initiatives increase access to high-quality and culturally appropriate health, education and social services targeted to the needs of children and families. Federal grant programs such as Promise Neighborhoods and Project LAUNCH (Linking Assets for Unmet Needs in Children’s Health) have refocused attention on place-based initiatives, but the idea is not new. During the past decade, several communities across the nation have successfully designed, implemented and financed place-based strategies that offer robust models and lessons learned.

In 2009, the Nemours Foundation, The California Endowment and an anonymous donor launched the Children’s Outcomes Project (COP) to promote the work of integrated, multi-sector, place-based initiatives aimed at promoting the health and well-being of children and their families. The project has three goals:

- “Provide a forum for information sharing and joint learning among local, state and national leaders working to improve the health and well-being of children in their communities and nationwide;
- Help integrated, multi-sector, place-based initiatives advance innovative policies and practices for children in their communities and states; and
- Work collaboratively to inform federal policy to support integrated, multi-sector, place-based initiatives that improve the health and well-being of children.”

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The COP brings together the leaders of eight state and local initiatives (teams) and national experts in a learning community. Although each of the eight initiatives is unique, they share many common goals related to improving children’s health and well-being, integrating multiple sectors and focusing on systemic change. In all eight COP sites, leaders strive to scale up supports and services for children and families and build the capacity and infrastructure of organizations to work collaboratively toward shared outcomes over time.

COP participants meet twice annually and, between these face-to-face gatherings, they exchange ideas and information, share successes and challenges and engage in joint problem-solving. The national experts bring information on innovations in policy, program development, systems reform and financing. Through a peer learning process, the state and local teams, national experts and funders have developed a keen understanding of the challenges to scaling up and sustaining multi-sector community initiatives. They also have developed ideas on and experience with successful practices that can help meet those challenges in the short term and over time.

Working together, the COP teams have developed a rich body of knowledge based on experiences in their own very different communities. This knowledge is immediately useful to COP participants and their partners. It can also be a valuable resource to decision-makers and stakeholders nationally and in states and communities nationwide who face the same challenges in their efforts to design, implement and sustain successful multi-sector, place-based initiatives. Accordingly, staff at Nemours and The California Endowment, as well as the anonymous donor, are committed not only to supporting the project, but also to widely disseminating the lessons learned from the COP and potential policy implications. Of particular interest are promising approaches for financing and sustaining these initiatives.

Study Purposes

With these goals in mind, Nemours asked The Finance Project (TFP), a national policy research and technical assistance organization, to conduct two case studies to document how Children’s Outcomes Project leaders in Alameda County, California and Palm Beach County, Florida, have financed and sustained their initiatives. The study findings are expected to benefit the case study communities, other COP initiatives and leaders in the field in numerous ways.

For the case study communities, the study findings support a deeper understanding of strategies, activities and organizational behavior that lead to success. In addition, the results can be used to identify underused funding sources and revenue streams that align with key goals and indicators for children and their families. Finally, the findings clarify the extent to which current funding addresses high-priority funding needs.

For Children’s Outcomes Project initiatives, the case studies take an in-depth look at the financing and sustainability strategies the two COP sites have used to support their work. The case studies also identify concrete steps for funding these initiatives in the future and provide information to support policy change at the federal level.
The case studies build the knowledge base on what works in financing and sustaining multi-sector, community-level approaches to achieving prevention outcomes for children and families. This information benefits the *family and children’s services field*. In addition, the findings can help *federal officials* understand what policies support and impede the development of multi-sector, place-based initiatives.

**Research Approach**

The Finance Project staff used a qualitative case study approach to collect and analyze information on key financing and sustainability challenges and strategies in Alameda County and Palm Beach County. Several research questions guided the work:

- **How is each COP initiative organized, structured, governed and financed?** What circumstances led to its creation? What are the desired results and key features of these initiatives? How do community leaders collaborate to achieve desired outcomes?

- **What key outcomes have been achieved?** How and why have the COP initiatives been successful?

- **What are administrative, fiscal and/or policy barriers to the success of these initiatives?** How have leaders approached the challenges of scaling up and sustaining their work? What approaches have they taken to address those challenges and plan for sustainability?

- **What financing strategies have been designed and implemented to expand and improve the quality of programs and services and strengthen the underlying infrastructure of these COP initiatives?** How is funding generated and used to achieve desired outcomes? What is the mix of financing strategies and funding sources?

- **What nonmonetary resources are important to the initiatives’ sustainability?** What processes have they used to put and keep those resources in place over time?

- **What happened in the past three years to change the COP leaders’ thinking about how their initiative is financed?** What conditions changed to cause them to change financing strategies and approaches?

- **What critical partnerships were needed and why?** How have they helped in sustaining the work of the COP initiative?

- **What have been the key accelerators that have helped at critical points and helped sustain the work?**

**Framework for Analyzing Sustainability.** The Finance Project has developed a framework that identifies several key elements of sustainability. Although all the elements are important, their mix and balance vary with local conditions. Accordingly, the tipping point for achieving sustainability will be different for each initiative.

*“The lessons learned through the creativity and dedication of those working in Alameda County and Palm Beach County will not only be useful to the Children’s Outcomes Project participants, but also to those working in the field who are looking for additional, innovative ways to address the challenges of long-term financing and sustainability.”*

– Debbie I. Chang, MPH, *Vice President Nemours Policy and Prevention*
TFP staff used this analytic framework to examine the strategies that First 5 Alameda County and the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County have used to finance and sustain their work to improve the health and well-being of young children and families. Key elements of sustainability include these:

- **Vision and Results Orientation** – the clear concept, mission and desired results that guide programs and services and management and financing decisions and actions;
- **Strategic Financing Orientation** – the alignment between resource needs to achieve desired outcomes and the financing strategies and funding sources that are used to marshal necessary fiscal support;
- **Broad Base of Community Support** – support from families, community leaders and the public for programs and services that are provided to achieve desired outcomes for children and families;
- **Adaptability to Changing Conditions** – the capacity to respond and adjust to changing economic, fiscal, political and cultural conditions that affect the success of the initiative; and
- **Sound Internal Systems** – the quality and effectiveness of internal management systems, procedures and practices that are the underlying infrastructure for the initiative, including financial management, quality standards and support, data collection and human resources management.

**Data Sources and Collection Strategies.**
The Finance Project staff gathered information through phone and in-person interviews with key staff from the lead Children’s Outcomes Project organizations and their partners, government agencies and other collaborative bodies engaged in early childhood planning, service delivery and funding in the counties. TFP staff also reviewed relevant internal and external reports, including recent strategic planning documents, budgets and expenditure plans, financial audits and evaluations of site-based programs.
Case Study Structure and Contents

The case studies describe what The Finance Project staff learned through an in-depth examination of the COP initiatives in California’s Alameda County and Florida’s Palm Beach County. Each case study is structured to include several sections:

- **Site Overview** – provides background information, including the governance structure, the programs and services offered and the financing structure of early childhood programs and services;
- **Financing and Sustainability Challenges** – highlights major structural, fiscal and other challenges that threaten the long-term sustainability of the initiative;
- **Financing and Sustainability Strategies** – highlights the approaches that COP teams and partners have used to overcome the challenges they face in putting and keeping in place the resources needed to successfully sustain a highly productive, multi-sector early childhood initiative; and
- **Findings and Lessons Learned** – documents the key findings and lessons learned on how to finance and sustain integrated, multi-sector, place-based initiatives that might be applicable to other communities.

Findings, Lessons Learned and Implications for Action

In many ways, First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) and the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County (CSC) are managing and implementing similar multi-sector early childhood systems. Both initiatives fund and support health, education and family support programs and services for children – from conception through kindergarten entry – and their families. By achieving collective impact in partnership with public agencies, community-based organizations and local philanthropies, their goals are to promote children’s mental and physical health, school readiness and early school success, as well as foster strong supportive families who can effectively support their children’s development and academic success. They serve similar populations and have felt the effects of the Great Recession that began in 2008. Both F5AC and the CSC have achieved impressive gains and have had a significant positive impact on the lives of children and families in their county.

Despite these similarities, however, the two COP initiatives face different challenges to sustaining their initiatives and, consequently, have implemented strategies that reflect local conditions, laws and priorities. The case studies provide a way to compare these strategies and approaches.
Findings

Both COP initiatives rely on large dedicated funding streams as the primary source of revenue for their work. F5AC receives state funding generated by the Proposition 10 tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products. The CSC is a special taxing district that generates local revenue through an *ad valorem* property tax. Both revenue streams provide significant flexible funding for children’s services. Structurally, however, the funding sources are very different, which has significant implications for the long-term financing and sustainability of each site.

The Proposition 10 tobacco tax supporting F5AC is a “sin tax.” It aims to discourage smoking and other forms of tobacco use by raising the financial cost to consumers. Although the tax is a steady and dependable source of revenue, it is a declining revenue stream. As smokers respond to the negative incentive of the tax, funding for First 5 county grantees across California has steadily been reduced; funding will continue to decline in the years ahead. To fill the gap and expand funding to meet emerging needs and priorities, F5AC has focused its energies on using its dedicated revenue to leverage entitlement funds to increase support and sustain community-level programs and services.

Florida is the only state that permits the creation of local special taxing districts to support key community needs and priorities. The CSC is supported by an *ad valorem* tax of up to 1 mill on real estate. However, state law requires local voters to approve the annual millage rate and to renew the special taxing district itself every several years. In the current constrained economic environment, where anti-tax sentiment is strong, the CSC is vulnerable to rate cuts and to not being renewed as a special taxing district. To help overcome the effects of this uncertainty, the CSC has pursued a multi-pronged strategy that includes shifting from operating direct services to funding and supporting the infrastructure of other community organizations that deliver services. It also has adopted a stringent results-based accountability system to track and measure the performance of the CSC and all community partner organizations against desired outcomes. Moreover, it has invested in strategic communications to create a brand identity and ensure voters understand the vital role the CSC plays in the county.

The case studies illustrate how creative and energetic leaders in both counties have addressed the challenges of long-term financing and sustainability for multi-sector, place-based initiatives for children and families. Their funding sources are structurally quite different. Consequently, F5AC has focused on sophisticated fiscal leveraging as a strategy to replace declining funding from the tobacco tax. In contrast, driven by the need for voter approval, the CSC has pursued a results-based accountability system to demonstrate the organization’s return on investment for children, families and the community.
Lessons Learned

Despite the different financing challenges confronting each site, the CSC and F5AC have taken similar steps to put into place the critical elements of sustainability and reduce their reliance on the large dedicated funding streams that have been the primary source of support for their work. Although their specific activities differ and the level of emphasis placed on one strategy or another varies, both organizations have used the following approaches to achieve their goals:

- **A clear focus on vision, mission and desired results drives all actions and investments.** Results-based accountability systems that link desired outcomes for children and families to specific programmatic strategies and activities and investments in capacity-building are the foundation for all work in both organizations.

- **Significant community input in strategic planning shapes outcome targets and program priorities.** Both organizations have rigorous planning processes that encourage participation by board members, staff, leaders of partner organizations and community stakeholders.

- **Strategic financing follows from strategic planning.** For both organizations, budgeting is a direct result of strategic planning. Program staff and financial staff work closely to develop sound budgets that reflect good information on program and administrative costs. Budgets are thoroughly vetted by boards that are composed of key partners and community leaders and all budget and planning documents are easily accessible on the CSC and F5AC websites. Leaders can clearly identify gaps in funding and use existing resources to leverage additional needed funding.

- **The organization’s primary role has shifted from direct service provider to facilitator and intermediary to make the best use of resources.** Rather than competing with other community service providers, both organizations have moved away from providing direct services to performing a more robust role as facilitator and intermediary. The focus is now on strengthening and supporting their local partners, including helping them leverage and draw down other sources of funding. Both organizations are respected neutral conveners that can introduce ideas and innovations and encourage partners to work together to make them happen.

- **Performance-based contracts are used to ensure a clear focus on desired outcomes and quality programs.** Partner organizations are funded through contracts that spell out performance expectations and obligations to collect and report data on service delivery and client outcome measures. Performance is measured against these contractual agreements and continued funding depends on achieving expected results.
- **Data drives decision-making.** Both organizations have developed and maintain robust data systems to monitor partners’ contract performance as well as internal organizational performance and progress toward desired outcomes. Data are used to guide internal management decisions, investment decisions and external reporting to funders and community stakeholders.

- **A broad base of community support is nurtured.** Leaders in both organizations recognize the importance of support and goodwill from key stakeholders, including families, community leaders, program providers, elected officials and opinion leaders. They cultivate support through engagement and strategic communications to ensure broad awareness of the added value the CSC and F5AC bring to their county.

- **Strong internal management systems are maintained.** Recognizing that high-quality programs and services are rooted in high-performing organizations, the CSC and F5AC have invested in building their own internal management systems to ensure smooth operations, accountability and transparency. This includes financial, human resources and data management systems as well as communications and outreach functions. Both the CSC and F5AC also help build capacity in their partner organizations to make them stronger, more stable and more sustainable through technical assistance, training and support for back-office operations. For example, the CSC invested $10 million in infrastructure support and capacity-building in its 2012–2013 budget.

Both Alameda County and Palm Beach County are great examples of achieving significant results for children and families through collective impact. Their strategic approaches to financing and sustainability have created a rich framework for many partner organizations, community leaders and funders to work together. The CSC and F5AC have developed and expanded many of the same programs and services. They have invested in building similar management systems and organizational capacity. Yet the differences in local and state context have resulted in strategic approaches that are uniquely their own.

**Implications for Action**

The Finance Project did not undertake these case studies to develop prescriptive recommendations to guide financing and sustainability planning in other communities that are pursuing multi-sector, place-based initiatives for children and families. The work in Alameda County and Palm Beach County, however, affords a rich opportunity to learn from the experience of highly successful professionals who have responded creatively to the economic, social and legal threats and opportunities in their communities. Accordingly, several implications for action bear highlighting; these are organized by relevant audiences and actors.
Communities. Communities are encouraged to:

- Recognize the power and potential of a strong intermediary organization to undertake communitywide strategic planning; serve as a neutral convener; use data and results to support and strengthen the performance of partner organizations that deliver programs and services; boost the internal management capacity of partner organizations; and take the lead in strategic communications and financing. Both the CSC and F5AC are models of effective intermediary organizations in their county.

- Play the role of broker and facilitator to leverage results. Both the CSC and F5AC learned they could expand their reach by working collaboratively with community partners rather than serving as the primary service provider for children and families in their county. By playing the role of broker and facilitator rather than direct service provider, they were able to leverage additional funding, expand the breadth and depth of programs and services and provide the necessary infrastructure for achieving desired outcomes over time.

State and Local Policymakers. State and local policymakers can:

- Leverage federal financing opportunities for organizations and the community at large. Leveraging Medi-Cal funding has been a highly effective sustainability strategy for F5AC and its partner organizations. Title IV-E child welfare funds; Title I education funding; the Child Care and Development Fund; and Head Start, Early Head Start and Home Visiting funds offer important opportunities for leveraging and drawing down additional federal funding based on the availability of local matching funds.

- Explore the impact of requiring matching funds to draw down federal funds on individual programs and providers. Both the CSC and F5AC provide nonfederal matching funds to local programs so they can draw down federal funds that would otherwise be left untapped. Many federal grants from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services require a match that is increasingly difficult to achieve through state funding alone.

Funders. Funders may want to:

- Invest in increasing organizational capacity as well as in direct services. Without strong high-performing organizations as the cornerstone of systems-building efforts, it is very difficult to develop and maintain high-quality programs and services. Accordingly, public- and private-sector funders need to invest in building the capacity of provider organizations. In addition, funders may want to invest in intermediaries that can help build the internal management capacity of provider organizations.

- Take a long-range approach to supporting collective impact efforts. CSC and F5AC have been working in their communities for more than a decade, during which time they have experienced setbacks and successes. The two initiatives are sustained community institutions because, in part, they have had adequate time to plan, implement, evaluate and refocus their work over time and have had the funding to do so.
CASE STUDY FOR FINANCING AND SUSTAINING
MULTI-SECTOR, PLACE-BASED INITIATIVES:
FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY

Site Overview

Background

In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10 (Prop 10), a ballot measure that added a 50 cents tax to each pack of cigarettes and other tobacco products, such as chewing tobacco, sold in the state. Revenue generated through Prop 10 supports First 5, a state but county-administered program to improve early childhood education and the physical and mental health of children ages 0–5.

Approximately 20 percent of Prop 10 tax revenue is allocated to First 5 California for statewide expenditures to educate families and the general public on the importance of early nurturing; establish better-quality child care and other early childhood health, family support and education services throughout the state; and provide information, training and technical assistance support for the local county commissions.

Most of the funds, approximately 80 percent, is distributed to counties through the 58 county-level First 5 commissions. County commissions can be existing county agencies or can be established as independent entities. Allocations to each county are based on the number of births, according to the birth mother’s county of residence. County commissions develop strategic plans for allocating funds based on extensive public input on how best to meet local needs. Each county
commission develops and pursues its own plan for providing early childhood health and education services and other services to families of young children. Local funding plans also aim to encourage coordination and collaboration among public agencies, private community-based organizations, schools and civic groups to improve outcomes for children ages 0–5.

First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) is an innovative public entity created by the passage of Prop 10 (see First 5 Alameda County Mission on this page). It supports a multi-sector system of early childhood services that helps prepare young children in the county for success in school and in life. Prop 10 funding has been instrumental in improving outcomes for young children’s physical health, mental health and school readiness in Alameda County and throughout California and the tax has been an important revenue source for early childhood programs and services for more than a decade.

Prop 10 funding has declined during the past decade. As a “sin” tax, it has achieved its desired effect of discouraging smoking and the purchase of cigarettes. First 5 Alameda County was selected as a case study because of its creative efforts to sustain early childhood programs and services in the face of declining state funding. The county has a long track record and culture of forming partnerships among agencies and community groups to support positive outcomes for young children. These partnerships have facilitated a multi-sector response to changing fiscal conditions. In addition, F5AC is considered a leader in California in using local and state funding to effectively leverage other federal funding sources, including Medicaid, to enhance the quality of services and extend coverage to young children and families.

**Governance**

A nine-member volunteer commission oversees F5AC’s work. Commissioners are selected and appointed by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors based on their expertise in early care and education, health care, social services and work with children with special needs. Current commission members include leaders drawn from the county health care services agency, the county board of supervisors and the county social services agency and from the business, medical, social policy and early care and education sectors. To promote transparency and make planning and decision-making information easily accessible to families and the public, the Alameda County First 5 Commission posts its meeting agendas, discussion summaries and other strategic documents online. The full commission meets seven times per year.

**Strategic Planning**

Under the California Children and Families Act and other provisions of state law, F5AC develops a strategic plan every four years. The commission undertakes a rigorous year-round planning effort, with input from the community, parents and other key partners. A new plan for the period fiscal 2013 to fiscal 2017 was finalized in late 2012 (see Developing the 2013–2017 First 5 Alameda County Strategic Plan).
Several key planning activities occurred in developing the First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) Strategic Plan:

- Available information was obtained on the status and needs of children ages 0–5 and their families in Alameda County, enabling planning decisions to be based on solid objective data.
- Community forums were held to solicit public input on a draft version of the situation analysis. Changes suggested by community members were then incorporated. Some of these forums were held specifically for parents; others were open to all types of participants and were attended primarily by family and children services providers.
- Public meetings were held to use the information from the situation analysis to update the mission, vision, guiding principles, goals and desired outcomes.
- Information from the situation analysis, together with in-depth analysis of currently funded programs and additional research on proven and emerging methods of achieving the goals and outcomes, was used to identify potential strategies for Every Child Counts.
- Additional community forums were held to gather public input on these potential strategies. The insights gained from these steps were the basis for selecting the strategies presented in the strategic plan.
- F5AC staff reassessed current programs and considered new program approaches for implementing the strategies that have the greatest positive impact for children and families and the services they receive. Program modifications and funding allocations were presented and adopted, based on significant community input at public meetings.
- F5AC staff developed an accountability matrix that maps indicators and performance and process measures to the goals, outcomes and strategies approved by the commission to both monitor programs and detail the measurement of outcomes or results. Review of the literature, along with expert consultation and review by commissioners, informed revisions.

Programs and Services

F5AC serves as a catalyst, collaborator and funder as well as a capacity-builder for the organizations that provide direct services to children (see Figure 1 on page 13).¹ As a neutral, quasi-governmental organization, F5AC facilitates coordination that enables leaders from county agencies and nonprofit organizations to work collaboratively to support young children. It advances an integrated system of support for children and families by promoting blended funding; smooth transitions between programs and service systems; shared program and service goals and objectives; and common standards to ensure desired outcomes for young children and families in the county.

### FIGURE I: ROLES OF FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY

**CATALYST**

*Sparking grassroots and countywide efforts that support F5AC goals and using research and data to support policy, practice and system changes*

**COLLABORATOR**

*Working with public systems and community partners to advance services for young children and their families, advocating for funding and policy system changes*

**FUNDER OF DIRECT SERVICES TO CHILDREN**

*Funding community-based and public agency programs that serve children and families and funding F5AC staff working in the community*


F5AC incorporates the Strengthening Families\(^2\) approach, promoting protective factors to prevent child abuse and neglect. This includes developing parental resilience and social connections, providing concrete support in times of need and helping parents acquire parenting skills and knowledge of key child development benchmarks. Much of F5AC’s work is accomplished through the collective work of funded partners. A significant proportion of expenditures is paid out in grants and contracts for direct services.

The approaches, models or methods used to achieve F5AC goals and outcomes are referred to as strategies. Nine core strategies integrate the many different programs, services and supports needed to produce measurable effects for children and families (see Key Strategies for F5AC: 2013–2017 on page 14 and 15). Each strategy, in turn, is focused on specific target populations and outcomes where the strategy is expected to have the greatest impact and will address disparities identified in the planning process.\(^3\)
KEY STRATEGIES FOR F5AC: 2013–2017

- **Home Visiting/Family Support.** F5AC will fund county and community agencies to provide prenatal and postpartum home visiting services targeting teen parents, high-risk families and families whose babies have been in the neonatal intensive care unit. F5AC, in collaboration with the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) and its community partners, will work to create a home visiting/family support services system of care.

- **Help Me Grow.** Help Me Grow is a system of early identification and referral that supports children ages 0–5 with developmental, behavior and/or social-emotional concerns and their families. It builds collaboration across sectors, including health care, early care and education and family support to ensure better outcomes for children. A family navigator program and an early childhood Screening, Assessment, Referral and Treatment Linkage Line support families in accessing resources to meet their child’s needs.

- **Quality Early Care and Education.** F5AC will work closely with community partners to promote access to quality early care and education in family child care and center-based settings by providing coaching, consultation, funding and incentives for site-based quality improvement; prioritizing service to programs that enroll children with high need; supporting access to professional development opportunities for the child care workforce that increase use of best and promising practices; and developing and implementing an integrated regional child care quality rating and improvement system.

- **School Readiness Initiative.** To prepare children for their elementary school experience, the F5AC School Readiness Initiative provides support addressing key areas that research shows are instrumental in promoting early development and learning. The initiative will continue to support summer prekindergarten programs and school transition efforts working closely with school districts to integrate F5AC-funded services with Transitional Kindergarten and Full-Service School efforts. F5AC will work with the Interagency Children’s Policy Council to complete a countywide school readiness evaluation to set a benchmark for countywide school readiness outcomes.

- **Place-Based Initiatives.** Project LAUNCH (Linking Assets for Unmet Needs in Children’s Health), a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) ending in fiscal 2014, is a collaboration between F5AC, Alameda County Maternal, Paternal, Adolescent and Child Health (a division of ACPHD) and the California Department of Maternal and Child Health.

- **Training.** As an organization with declining revenue, F5AC understands that it is most valuable when its work leads to sustainable change in knowledge and skill to help partners effectively serve families with children ages 0–5. To accomplish this, F5AC will continue to be a resource that provides training, coaching and consultation and capacity-building opportunities for its partner agencies and the workforce serving families with young children. The types of training F5AC offers varies by audience and training and capacity-building is integrated into each of the F5AC strategies.
Grants for Community Supports. Grants for Community Supports will continue to foster innovative community-based approaches to supporting parents and children ages 0–5. Grant-making encourages established community-based agencies to fill gaps in service and encourage new partners to expand and enhance their focus on families with young children. F5AC’s grant-making approach offers funds not only to provide services, but also for training and technical assistance to support the sustainable use of promising practices.

Evaluation and Technology. F5AC will offer technical assistance on developing useful evaluation tools and it develops countywide baselines of key indicators such as children’s readiness for kindergarten and their trajectory toward third-grade success. Technology supports include leveraging technology to connect data across public data systems; facilitating the certification of county home visiting models as promising practices; building technology that streamlines the sharing of information, encourages the use of best practices and promotes efficient delivery of supports; and developing research and data points to readily communicate the impact of programs and initiatives on children and families outcomes.

Policy/Advocacy and Communication. At a time of shrinking public and private funding, advocating for policies and programs that promote the health and well-being of children during their most critical years of development is a critical role for F5AC. It works on multiple levels to support the creation of an early childhood system of care, including coordination, support and linkage of early childhood policy efforts across the county. It monitors key legislative and budget issues impacting early childhood systems and participates in local, state and national policy work to promote its work and learn from other innovative initiatives.

Accountability Framework

F5AC is committed to measuring the impact of all the programs it funds. To facilitate this effort, F5AC has developed an accountability matrix that includes program targets, performance measures and outcome indicators to monitor and measure the impact of all F5AC programs and identify areas for potential in-depth evaluation. The matrix serves three functions:

- **Creates an integrated framework** that reflects program goals, outcomes and F5AC’s commitment to systems change;
- **Clearly states the desired results** of F5AC and the strategies employed to achieve them; and
- **Ensures accountability** of F5AC’s partners, contractors and grantees.

The accountability matrix is continually revised to reflect program changes and previous results. Detailed programmatic accountability plans are developed for each program and are attached to contracts.
Financing Structure

As required under current state law, F5AC has adopted a long-range financial plan alongside its strategic plan. The financial plan defines the objectives, policies and strategies for obtaining, managing and sustaining the financial resources necessary to implement the strategic plan. The financial plan is reviewed annually, at a minimum, to ensure it remains consistent with the strategic plan and is a meaningful blueprint for proactive management of financial resources. The financial plan is a separate document because it may be revised more frequently than the strategic plan.

The long-range financial plan serves as the initial guide for developing a detailed annual budget. Each budget covers one fiscal year, which runs from July 1 to June 30. The annual budget, adopted by the commission in a public meeting, becomes the primary tool for managing revenues and expenditures throughout each fiscal year.

F5AC is committed to ensuring the greatest possible benefit is realized for young children and their families through the use of First 5 resources. The following guidelines were established to help meet this goal and guide the allocation of F5AC funding:

- Funds will only be allocated to activities that directly further the elements of the strategic plan or that are necessary for the operation of F5AC, consistent with the purposes expressed in the California Children and Families Act.

- In compliance with California Revenue and Taxation Code section 30131.4, Trust Fund monies will be used only to supplement existing levels of service and/or create new services, not to fund existing levels of service. No monies from the Children and Families Trust Fund will be used to supplant state or local General Fund money for any purpose.

- All recipients of funding must show a commitment to accountability and be willing to work with F5AC to measure the impact and efficacy of their services.
Revenue. Figure 2 highlights the funding streams supporting F5AC for fiscal 2011–2012. Prop 10 tobacco tax revenues account for nearly 70 percent of total revenues and available funds, with the remaining 30 percent coming from other sources.

A closer look at the revenue sources that support F5AC, in addition to Prop 10 funding, is based on the 2011–2012 budget.4

- **Grants (Federal, State, Private)** includes federal grants (a Screening, Assessment, Referral and Treatment (SART) grant and, starting in fiscal 2012–2013, a Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT–ELC) grant); state funds from a Comprehensive Approach to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) PLUS grant; and private grants from the Thomas J. Long and Kellogg Foundations.

- **Interagency Income** includes two SAMHSA grants (Early Connections and Project LAUNCH), state Medicaid reimbursements and state Child Health Disability Prevention funds that support the SART Linkage Line. (The federal funds are received through individual contracts with county agencies.)

- **Fiscal Leveraging** includes the Administrative Activities portion of Medi-Cal that is claimed by F5AC as well as revenue generated through Targeted Case Management services. Importantly, funding leveraged through F5AC matching funds, or through F5AC capacity-building efforts to help other organizations claim federal funding, is not included in this percentage.

- **Investment Revenue** includes the revenue generated through investments in the form of interest earned, less payments for portfolio management.

- **Sustainability Funds** comprise the F5AC’s reserve fund, which was set aside to cover expenditures and future costs as the expected decline of tobacco tax revenue occurs.

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4. F5AC internal budget documents provided by F5AC staff.
Expenditures. F5AC allocates approximately 82 percent of its annual revenue to cover the cost of direct services to young children and families in the community. These expenditures fund different public programs and contracted services, such as home visiting, quality early care and education and school readiness initiatives. Organizational spending covers the cost of data systems, evaluation, capacity-building and infrastructure to support the administration of contracts and grants to programs. Figure 3 shows the expenditure categories for F5AC’s fiscal 2011–2012 budget.

**Figure 3: First 5 Alameda County, Adopted 2011-12 Budget, Expenses, by Expenditure Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>20,670,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and Technology</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant fiscal pressures – the result of declining tobacco tax revenue and overwhelming state and local budget constraints during the past several years – have caused F5AC to focus its sustainability efforts in three key areas:

- **Fiscal.** The F5AC fiscal leveraging plan identifies specific strategies to maximize revenues. Four sources have been targeted in collaboration with Alameda County partners to generate additional revenue for Alameda County: Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (Medi-Cal outreach), Targeted Case Management (case management for Medi-Cal recipients), Child Health Disability Prevention (early prevention and access to services) and Title 4-E (at risk for foster care).

- **Community Commitment.** As a response to decreasing funding, F5AC works in close partnership with its contractors and grantees to change community practices. It encourages its funded and nonfunded partners, including county and community agencies, community colleges, school districts and libraries, to adopt best program and management practices as well as integrate efforts to support the ages 0–5 population into its ongoing programming for all age groups.

- **Policy and Legislative Efforts.** As new opportunities through the Affordable Care Act, Race to the Top and other federal initiatives emerge, F5AC actively explores opportunities to support services in early care and education, home visiting and child development and early identification. It also is involved in local, state and national policy issues that address reimbursement and funding streams for services. During 2013, F5AC will develop a policy agenda focused on sustainability.

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5. Ibid.
Financing and Sustainability Challenges

First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) faces significant financing and sustainability challenges, including:

- Declining revenue from Prop 10;
- Local and state budgetary constraints;
- A lack of coordination among county- and community-level initiatives;
- Ingrained practices in community-based organizations;
- A need to demonstrate accountability for public funds; and
- A need to communicate the results of investments.

The commission and its partner organizations and agencies are acutely aware of these challenges and have addressed them directly in planning for sustainability.

Declining Revenue from Prop 10

Perhaps the most significant challenge facing F5AC is the fact that Prop 10, the primary dedicated funding source that supports the initiative’s multi-sector early care and intervention system for young children, is a declining revenue stream. This “sin tax” aims to decrease tobacco use and the purchase of tobacco products; as consumer behavior changes, tax revenue declines. As a result, fewer funds are available for use by First 5 organizations across the state despite the growing number of families with young children at risk.

Local and State Budgetary Constraints

As with many health, education and social services agencies, the past few years have been a challenging period for First 5 county initiatives across California. The 2008 economic downturn created significant pressure on state and local budgets. All sources of state revenue have declined and state legislators have increasingly expressed interest in tapping Prop 10 funding to fill budget gaps in their effort to keep the state solvent. Coupled with the natural decline in revenue as the tax has successfully discouraged tobacco use, First 5 initiatives have experienced significant funding reductions and budgetary pressure during the past four years.

Lack of Coordination Among County- and Community-Level Initiatives

Throughout Alameda County, significant concentrations of need exist for intensive, multi-sector early childhood supports and services. Although some neighborhoods, such as Oakland and Hayward, are highly visible, many other less-visible pockets of need are evident. For nearly 20 years, F5AC has worked collaboratively to design innovative strategies and programs to meet the needs of children ages 0–5 and their families countywide, recognizing the inherent differences among urban, suburban and rural communities. Among the most basic issues are service gaps and program duplications, particularly in communities where local philanthropies are engaged in intensive efforts to overcome the most intractable problems associated with social and economic disadvantage. Coordinating county- and community-level planning to improve child and family outcomes and make the best use of available resources is complex and time consuming.
**Ingrained Practices in Community-Based Organizations**

Through its strategic investments, F5AC seeks to create an effective and efficient support system for children ages 0–5 and their families. Often, to accomplish the twin goals of effectiveness and efficiency, the commission promotes new approaches, strategies and programs to its contracted partners. Change can be challenging for community-based nonprofit organizations and public agencies that have established management and administrative policies, procedures and practices. Successfully promoting changes in program operations and management can be a slow, incremental process that requires significant incentives and support.

**Need to Demonstrate Accountability for Public Funds**

F5AC controls a significant budget – more than $14 million annually – composed chiefly of public funds. Among the most important funding sources, besides Prop 10, is federal Medicaid claiming. As a result, the commission is subject to extensive scrutiny in the way it allocates funds. In an era of tight local and state budgets, policymakers and taxpayers want to see a convincing return on investment from social programs. Additionally, state agency officials often resist creative uses of federal entitlement funds, fearing audit exceptions that can call into question all state Medicaid claims.

**Need to Communicate the Results of Investments**

Tracking and evaluation show that F5AC investments in programs and services have had a positive impact on young children and families. Yet communicating results in a clear and compelling way that families, community leaders, funders and taxpayers can understand and remember is an ongoing challenge. Connecting results to investments is not intuitive for many audiences and it requires telling success stories so listeners can grasp the importance of specific programs and services and relate these initiatives to children’s lives. It also requires encouraging a broad and enduring commitment to improving the health and well-being of very young children and their families.

**Financing and Sustainability Strategies**

Regardless of the quality and value of programs and services, intensive, multi-sector, place-based initiatives can unravel, if leaders and stakeholders fail to plan thoughtfully for sustainability. A strong and sustainable initiative requires:

- A clear vision and a results orientation;
- A strategic and entrepreneurial financing orientation;
- A broad base of community support;
- An ability to adapt to changing community contexts and conditions; and
- Strong internal systems.
Having adequate financial resources is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for sustaining an initiative such as First 5 Alameda County (F5AC). The long-standing sustainability of an initiative is questionable without key nonfinancial resources, such as the capacity to demonstrate convincing results toward accomplishing the organization’s vision; the ability to marshal and maintain supportive grassroots and grasstops relationships in the community; and strong internal systems to manage both fiscal and nonfiscal operations. To address its financing challenges, F5AC has implemented strategies that touch on each element of sustainability.

Vision and Results Orientation

Too often, leaders worry about sustaining a specific program or set of activities and lose sight of why. Leaders force themselves to focus on strategies that will accomplish their primary goals and objectives when they begin their work with this question: Financing for what? (See Vision and Results Orientation: Keys to Success on page 26.)

F5AC has clearly answered this question in its strategic plan and it revisits funding priorities on a regular four-year basis through a rigorous planning process. The plan defines its mission as “[supporting] a countywide continuous prevention and early intervention system that promotes optimal health and development, narrows disparities and improves the lives of children [ages] 0–5 and their families.”

In its 2013–2017 strategic plan, F5AC also lays out guiding principles (see Figure 4). These principles help flesh out the services and programs it will provide, the children and families it will target and the role it will play in working with community partners to develop a multi-sector early childhood system.

FIGURE 4: FIRST FIVE ALAMEDA COUNTY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

| Honor and respect the diversity of the families we serve | Narrow disparities by focusing on high-risk communities and populations |
| Promote systems and policy change by enhancing existing systems, creating systems of care, building capacity, strengthening partnerships, and advocating at the local, state and national levels |
| Increase access of families in need to family-friendly, culturally and linguistically appropriate, community-based services | Use models and approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness through research and replication |


Planning for Results. Every four years, F5AC leaders undertake a comprehensive review of the agency’s mission, goals, key strategies and activities. This approach is driven both by data on the status and needs of the county’s young children and their families as well as significant community input in setting priorities and developing programs and services to support children ages 0–5. It also is central to setting measurable goals for desired outcomes.

Guided by its intensive and sustained focus on mission, F5AC has had a real and lasting impact in the county. Research, analysis and public input determined the strategies and activities that F5AC will implement to achieve the following outcomes between 2013 and 2017:

- Parents/primary caregivers provide stable, supportive and nurturing environments for children.
- Children are prepared for school through quality early experiences.
- Children reach their optimal developmental outcomes.
- A multi-sector, coordinated early childhood system will be operating in Alameda County.

Measuring and Tracking Results. Data serves a myriad of uses in Alameda County, including tracking community-level results toward common goals and outcomes; monitoring the effectiveness of interventions; and measuring grantee progress toward goals identified in the performance-based contracts. Data and outcome targets are refined over time as results are achieved and new data related to community needs becomes available. (See Appendix A for a sample accountability plan of a funded program.)

F5AC has created an accountability matrix that includes program targets, performance measures and outcome indicators to monitor and measure the impact of programs and that identifies areas for potential in-depth evaluation. The matrix is continually revised to reflect program changes and previous results. Detailed programmatic accountability plans are developed for each program and are attached to contracts with funded organizations.

The accountability matrix provides an internal guide, assisting F5AC commissioners and staff in program and fiscal decision-making. It also serves as a monitoring and quality assurance tool, providing expectations regarding the role funded programs play in helping the organization meet its goals. Table 1 shows two indicators from the accountability matrix.
The accountability matrix clearly demonstrates the commission’s interest in using data to learn not only what is being done, but also how well it is being done. To accomplish these twin goals, F5AC provides technical assistance and ongoing consultations to community partners in evaluation methods and maintains multiple data systems, including ECChange, Pathways and ECC Online. F5AC funds the data systems’ development, maintenance and hosting; upgrades; and on-the-ground implementation. It also staffs a help desk and supports providers.

- **ECChange.** ECChange is a Web-based cross-agency case management application enabling confidential tracking of interventions in a manner compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The application enables the unique identification, tracking and monitoring of families receiving family support and school readiness services and informs accountability and evaluation requirements for Prop 10, fiscal audit requirements and regular program quality review. ECChange functions as a secure network that promotes accessibility to an exchange of information and services from any entry point to the system and respects the privacy and confidentiality rights of the individuals receiving services and their families. It supports consistent tracking and the use of best practices, whenever possible, for field assessment, case narration, encounters, client registration, case closure, service planning, provider feedback and service referrals.

ECChange can also track service delivery models beyond home visiting case management, such as peer-to-peer specialty provider consultations, brief interventions and community events engagements. Staff and partners see the application as contributing to rich and easily available case management background for all providers who work with children or families. All F5AC partners offering case management services through home visiting must use the data system, but access is free. Training on how to access ECChange and make the best use of the application also is free to staff in partner agencies.
- **Pathways.** Launched in October 2009, Pathways is a comprehensive Web-based referral management tool to support the Screening, Assessment, Referral and Treatment (SART) program. SART aims to increase early identification of children with developmental or social-emotional concerns and provide early intervention and services to help them reach their full potential.

- **ECC Online.** ECC Online is a Web-based grants management and scheduling tool developed for F5AC. The tool tracks grants, grantees and their required reports. F5AC creates a record for each funded program and/or community-based organization that includes the dollar amount and terms of the contract, including specific outcome targets and performance measures. ECC Online also tracks early care and education provider stipends, manages online applications for grants and delivers online training registration and scheduling. The site is free of charge to funded programs and agencies and facilitates oversight of funds and in-kind resources. Where individual grantees demonstrate the need for additional support and resources, F5AC provides technical assistance and workshops to support improved program accountability and implementation.

ECChange and Pathways are two of many data systems in the county that track the services that families access. Practitioners using either ECChange or Pathways can seamlessly refer families and children to appropriate services as needs change. (See Appendix B for a sample data sharing agreement for programs.)

F5AC is looking to technology innovations to link its data with key public data sets as a way to seek meaningful information on children born in the county, early risk factors, interventions and outcomes. The ideal operating scenario would be for the data systems to connect F5AC data and data from other agencies, including public health, mental health and local school systems, in order to track and assess children along a growth and development continuum. Additionally, the information would be aggregated so First 5 Alameda partners and the public could know how many children have met the benchmark outcomes: school readiness, success by third grade and free from abuse and neglect. Identification of programs and services that are linked to the most positive outcomes would also be possible.

The robust ECChange, Pathways and ECC Online systems have been instrumental in building the culture of accountability and creating greater opportunities to share data and evidence of results that support the priorities and approaches in F5AC’s strategic plan. Designing, building and maintaining a cutting-edge data system that can push and pull data from public agencies and community-based organizations, while meeting federal HIPAA and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act requirements, is an enormous challenge. Yet it is a course that F5AC is pursuing at full speed.
Communicating Results. A clear vision and focus on outcomes does not advance sustainability, if a program leader cannot communicate results in a compelling way. F5AC is an organization that relies on dedicated state tax revenues to finance its activities, so its leaders must communicate results clearly to diverse stakeholders, including families, taxpayers, staff of partner organizations and public funding agencies and private foundations. The recent economic climate has increased the importance of communicating results as First 5 initiatives across California fight to maintain funding. Boiling down a massive amount of complex information into targeted, understandable and compelling messages that meet the needs of key audiences requires experience and effective communications skills.

F5AC took two steps to inform its messaging and the development of the 2013–2017 strategic plan. First, the organization completed a six-month study to understand the impact of its work across the county. It used a mixed-method approach that included a community survey and key informant interviews to gather information. Staff members are now analyzing the results to help align future F5AC program planning and implementation and target communications to key audiences. Second, F5AC hired a communications specialist to manage public information and outreach efforts and lead some of its work in communicating results.

The importance of effective communications is illustrated by the public’s lack of awareness of the large body of scientific research supporting the importance of funding for early childhood. Conveying this type of information is a key strategy for expanding public support and willingness to fund early childhood programs and services in the face of competing priorities.

In the interest of better communications, F5AC has redesigned its website. The organization also is creating new materials for community outreach and broadly distributing the state-funded kit for parents in the county. Recognizing the important role F5AC staff members play in communicating organizational achievement and results to the community organizations they work with, the communications specialist is refining internal information management and results sharing to ensure all staff members know, understand and can effectively communicate the commission’s impact in Alameda County.
VISION AND RESULTS ORIENTATION: KEYS TO SUCCESS

Staying focused on First 5 Alameda County’s vision and mission and tracking and communicating progress toward desired results have played a critical role in its long-term sustainability. Following are keys to success related to maintaining a vision and focusing on results:

- **Review and revise vision and mission statements** on a periodic basis with significant parent, provider, stakeholder and expert input.
- **Develop clear outcome targets** for funded programs and managing agencies/organizations, communicate these targets and create accountability structures to document progress toward desired outcomes.
- **Maintain robust data systems** that track progress toward outcome targets and **share information** on interim and cumulative results with partners, stakeholders and the public.

Strategic Financing Orientation

Leaders with a strategic financing orientation have knowledge of available resources, understand where gaps in funding exist and use different funding sources and strategies to support their work (see Strategic Financing Orientation: Keys to Success on page 34). To build and sustain a countywide early intervention and prevention system for young children, F5AC makes strategic, targeted investments in focused priority areas. The commission makes community grants; invests in capacity-building for community-based service providers through training and technical assistance; and underwrites infrastructure investments, such as data systems and evaluation. F5AC also aggressively pursues diverse financing strategies, including leveraging Medicaid funding, to balance its funding portfolio.

Specifically, to support and sustain its work, F5AC:

- **Accesses multiple funding sources**, including federal, state, local and private funding sources;
- **Maximizes public revenues through fiscal leveraging**, including accessing Medi-Cal funding to support services to eligible children and families; and
- **Targets investments to building capacity and infrastructure**, including seeding innovative pilot programs, by embedding programs and F5AC staff in county and community-based organizations and making investments in infrastructure.

**Access Multiple Funding Sources.** Although tobacco tax funding is still the single largest revenue source supporting F5AC, the commission and F5AC staff have long recognized the importance of working toward a broad and balanced funding portfolio that includes a mix of federal, state, local and private revenues. F5AC has been highly successful in applying for federal and private grant funding to support its work in several areas, including home visiting, early childhood education and early childhood mental health. In 2012, approximately 69 percent of the organization’s budget came from Prop 10 funds, 16 percent from sustainability funds, 5 percent from grant funding, 8 percent from interagency income, 3 percent from fiscal leveraging and 2 percent from investment income (see Figure 1 on page 13).
F5AC not only taps multiple funding sources, but also uses multiple financing strategies depending on its needs and the best strategic opportunities to fill those needs. In 2012, F5AC accessed the following competitive funding aligned to its program priorities:10

- **Interagency Income** (including federal grants that pass through to the state/local agency)
  - **Project LAUNCH [Linking Assets for Unmet Needs in Children’s Health]** ($608,237) – Funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Alameda County Public Health Department. Funding promotes the healthy development of young children within a targeted East Oakland community through the expansion of culturally competent, evidence-based program services to promote the integration of mental health services, extend developmental screenings and support safe and healthy environments for children from birth to age 8 and their families.
  - **Early Connections** ($305,184) – Funded through SAMHSA and the Alameda County Behavioral Health Department. The grant provides funding to create an infrastructure for a system of care for children from birth to age 5 and their families. F5AC received funding for several components of the grant.
  - **Help Me Grow Linkage Line** ($142,524) – Funded by the Alameda County Public Health Department, this program is partially reimbursed by federal Child Health Disability Prevention funding to support a countywide phone triage system for providers and parents to ensure children get connected to further assessments and/or community supports and treatment.

- **Federal and State Grants**
  - **Federal SART** ($400,000) – The grant is a Screening, Assessment, Referral and Treatment earmark.
  - **RTT/ELC** – The Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge grant provides funding to align F5AC’s investments within its quality early care and education portfolio to county efforts to build a quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs.
  - **State CARES** – A state Comprehensive Approach to Raising Educational Standards grant supports a professional development and retention program that aims to build a highly qualified and culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood workforce.

- **Private Foundation Funding**
  - **Thomas J. Long Foundation** ($400,000) – The grant supports transitional kindergarten services through school districts.
  - **Kellogg Foundation** ($40,000) – The two-year grant (fiscal 2011–2013) supports the replication of the national Help Me Grow program across California.
F5AC also has been successful in coordinating funding from several sources to support its program grants, investments in infrastructure and capacity-building efforts. The organization braids flexible administrative dollars derived from local, state and federal funding to support key programs and conduct evaluations of internal programs such as its School Readiness Initiative. Additional enhancements to the ECC Online and ECChange databases are funded using braided federal and state funding. Funding for these initiatives includes Prop 10 funds, Medi-Cal administrative funds, federal SAMHSA grants and private foundation grants.

Maximize Public Resources Through Fiscal Leveraging. F5AC is a recognized leader in leveraging its investments to draw down the maximum amount of available federal funding. For more than a decade, staff has worked diligently to take full advantage of opportunities to leverage Medicaid and other federal funding sources to support its system of care for young children (see Leveraging Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program Funding for Early Childhood on page 31). In particular, county agencies, along with entrepreneurial community-based organizations, have been at the forefront of efforts to expand the number of children they serve and the covered services they provide, at least partially, through Medi-Cal reimbursement and leveraging (see Types of Medi-Cal Claiming below).

**TYPES OF MEDI-CAL CLAIMING**

Medi-Cal is California’s Medicaid health care program. The program pays for various medical services for children and adults with limited income and resources. Alameda County has experience in claiming Medi-Cal funding through four strategies, which enables programs or agencies to bill a portion of costs for Medi-Cal-eligible families.

- **Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA).** Activities that can be claimed include outreach to programs and families, application assistance for families, certain transportation costs, contract administration, program planning and policy development and MAA coordination and claims administration.

- **Targeted Case Management (TCM).** Claimable services include case management to help clients access medical and social-emotional services, including assessment. Other activities that can be claimed are developing written service plans, conducting periodic reviews, linking with other services, providing consultation and referral services and providing additional followup.

- **Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT).** Activities that can be claimed include periodic early intervention screenings (e.g., physical, mental, developmental, vision, hearing and dental) and treatment services for young children, including individual, family and play therapy.

- **Child Health Disability Prevention (CHDP): Health EPSDT.** Activities that can be claimed include health checkups for infants, children and teens, which include all needed shots and lab tests; a dental, vision and hearing screening; and referrals for services.
Financial leveraging entails several steps:

- **Step 1: Develop a Fiscal Leveraging Plan.** Anticipating a decline in Prop 10 funding, F5AC developed its first fiscal leveraging plan in 2000. F5AC’s initial plan focused on leveraging opportunities in its work. This initial plan was focused on effectively investing the county’s Prop 10 funds in a manner that is sustainable and creates long-term impact and results. To accomplish this, the plan identified specific opportunities to draw down additional federal and state revenues in order to increase capacity and provide for long-term sustainability of the early childhood system.  

Once F5AC had experience in leveraging funds to support the countywide early childhood system, it convened a collaborative team of F5AC and county agency staff, also known as the Every Child Counts Fiscal Workgroup. The workgroup analyzed the services identified in the approved service plan to determine where opportunities existed for F5AC and its partner organizations to leverage additional funding (see Fiscal Leveraging: Maximizing Potential below). For example, for services provided to children in their homes, including home visiting and mental health services, the team analyzed insurance coverage of the target population and considered the supports the population already received from public agencies. These specific services and billing codes were then examined against the approved list of funding sources. The goal was to determine where opportunities for additional leveraging were available and what activities were eligible for federal financial participation, including Medicaid and other federal reimbursements.

**FISCAL LEVERAGING: MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL**

The Every Child Counts Fiscal Workgroup made these observations regarding the potential for leveraging Medi-Cal funding to support early care and education services in the county:

- **For early care and education programs, fewer opportunities to leverage funds exist** because of Medi-Cal eligibility and reimbursement provisions. These programs typically do not provide Targeted Case Management services or Medi-Cal-eligible preventive services. If the programs do offer reimbursable services, these services often are not provided by personnel whose services are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.

- **Formalized collaborative agreements are needed** to work effectively with local nonprofit community-based organizations and other participating organizations, such as hospitals and managed care organizations, to support systems-building efforts that would allow for more leveraging opportunities.

- **Requiring community-based organizations to include leveraging in their proposals for funding,** as public agencies already are required to do, could bring in additional revenues and promote sustainability.

- **Technical assistance is needed for the community-based organizations** to become familiar with the leveraging process. A proposal from a community-based organization (CBO) is considered for funding based on its potential to leverage other funding, in addition to the services and activities the CBO provides.

Step 2: Implement the Fiscal Leveraging Plan. F5AC has developed a robust infrastructure to support efforts to leverage significant Medi-Cal funding. Since 2001, F5AC has leveraged and received $6,125,605 in Medi-Cal Administrative Activities reimbursements and $4,993,414 in Targeted Case Management reimbursements. In FY 2011-12, Alameda County claimed over $20 million dollars in Medi-Cal Administrative Activities and Targeted Case Management programs.

To facilitate implementation of the fiscal leveraging plan in the early years, F5AC created a workgroup. The workgroup included senior-level staff from all relevant child-serving agencies in the county to guide the processes of building capacity for fiscal leveraging, reporting on progress and sharing information across agencies on what worked and what challenges needed to be addressed. At monthly meetings, agency staff reported on the amount of Medi-Cal and other federal funding leveraged and they worked together to solve problems that arose along the way. This group, which included finance directors and key program staff from the county departments of education, child welfare and health and mental health, was composed of senior staff members who could make decisions and implement change on behalf of their agency’s leadership. Additionally, new partnerships and alliances were formed at these meetings, which enabled commission and agency staff to work collaboratively on strategies for streamlining and maximizing available federal funding, including sharing common assessment and referral forms.

Step 3: Scale Up Medi-Cal Fiscal Leveraging. F5AC has been instrumental in increasing the funding available for early childhood services in the county through fiscal leveraging in three ways:

- Managing Medi-Cal claiming on behalf of community-based organizations;
- Providing non-federal match to community-based organizations and public agencies to seek and leverage Medi-Cal, federal, state and private funds to support 0-5 programs; and
- Building the capacity of community-based organizations to manage their own claiming through training and technical assistance.

Managing Medi-Cal Claiming for Community-based Organizations. Initially, to increase interest in fiscal leveraging, F5AC conducted and managed the Medi-Cal claiming for grantee organizations that provided direct services to children and families. F5AC collected the reimbursement funding from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and then redistributed the funds to the provider organizations. To encourage participation, F5AC provided an incentive to service providers by establishing a revenue sharing agreement. Under this agreement, providers were required to invest any amount – up to a set threshold – in the F5AC-supported program but keep any additional funding that exceeded the threshold. The initial investment and incentives paid off as more organizations participated in leveraging Medi-Cal funding for eligible services.

12) Information obtained through interviews with First 5 Alameda County staff, county government officials, and other community agency staff, November 13, 2012.
Providing Nonfederal Match. F5AC also provides local match funding required for organizations to claim Medi-Cal funding for early childhood mental health and home visiting services and/or related administrative costs. For example, in 2011, F5AC provided $1.2 million in match funding to Children’s Hospital Oakland to support Special Start, a home visiting program targeting infants who leave the hospital’s neonatal unit with significant medical and/or social risk factors. Through this investment, the hospital was able to claim an additional $750,000 in Medi-Cal funding, primarily through Targeted Case Management and EPSDT services, to support the Special Start Program.

Building the Capacity to Claim. To promote long-term sustainability, since 2003, F5AC has worked with 75 community-based organizations to build their internal capacity to leverage Medi-Cal funding for the eligible children they serve. The commission created a fiscal leveraging assessment, a comprehensive process that helps community-based organizations identify opportunities to leverage additional funding, including Medi-Cal funds. Organizations that receive a community grant through F5AC are required to undergo a fiscal leveraging assessment process. The commission also has provided training and describes policy or administrative changes that impact claiming for Medi-Cal. (See Appendix C for a sample fiscal leveraging assessment tool.)

LEVERAGING MEDICAID AND CHILDREN’S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM FUNDING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Each community is unique, but lessons from First 5 Alameda County’s efforts to use Medi-Cal to expand early childhood services can be applied in many other communities. Following are important lessons:

- **Create a cross-agency workgroup** that includes senior-level staff who can make decisions to help guide the process.

- **Develop a thorough assessment of existing services**, including administrative functions, for early childhood and overlay this information with the state Medicaid plan to identify leveraging opportunities.

- **Provide incentives to community-based organizations**, such as claiming agreements, to share and reinvest additional revenues.

- **Provide training and technical assistance to community-based organizations** on how to develop claim plans, track and record required data and establish efficient billing processes.

Target Investments to Building Capacity and Infrastructure. To sustain investments in its multi-sector, place-based initiative as Prop 10 funds decline, F5AC has directed significant effort toward building the capacity and infrastructure of community-based service providers. Targets for these strategic investments are determined as part of the strategic planning process. Over the years, F5AC has employed four strategies very successfully: seeding and spinning off innovations; embedding F5AC services and staff in public agencies and provider organizations; filling service gaps; and investing in infrastructure and data systems.
Seeding and Spinning Off Innovations. F5AC has capitalized on the flexible nature of Prop 10 funding to create pilot programs that address evolving community needs. Many of the most innovative programs that operate in the county, including Another Road to Safety, started as a pilot funded by F5AC. Unlike more categorical county, state and federal funding, Prop 10 funds are not restricted as to the types of services that can be funded. F5AC’s status as a quasi-governmental organization means it is not required to comply with rigid state and county contracting policies and rules. This flexibility enables the commission to get projects off the ground quickly and to be nimble and responsive in the contracting process. For an example of how F5AC has successfully funded innovative pilot projects that have continued to thrive after the initial investment has ended, see Meeting Community Needs Through Innovation below.

**MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS THROUGH INNOVATION**

Another Road to Safety is the county’s Title IV-E waiver program that provides home-based support services for families who have entered the child welfare system. Alameda is one of two counties to receive a Title IV-E waiver that affords additional flexibility for using the funding, which is otherwise quite restrictive.

The waiver program stems from earlier efforts of the Alameda County Social Services Agency, working in tandem with the Children and Families Commission (First 5 Alameda County), to develop an early response system for families in the child welfare system. That system, funded in part through First 5 Alameda County, sought to address the lack of services available to prevent and intervene early in cases that were not considered high risk – which accounted for 80 percent of calls referred for abuse or neglect. First 5 Alameda County’s foresight in supporting effective alternatives to foster care, including prevention services for parents of children ages 0–5, provided the foundation that enabled the county to receive a federal waiver.

Embedding F5AC Services and Staff in Public Agencies and Provider Organizations. F5AC funds and places several of its own staff in county agencies and provider organizations to carry out programs and services (see Supporting Staff Who Meet Community Needs on the next page.) In keeping with long-term program strategies, the commission works toward staff eventually becoming employees of the host organizations with their positions being sustained and supported by other funding. Typically, these positions have provided services that do not include direct care or support for children – such as coordination, referral or case management – and, therefore, are difficult to fund using categorical program dollars. In some cases, the value of providing these services was unknown at the time they were initiated; funding the positions required a risk county agencies and provider organizations were unwilling or unable to take.
SUPPORTING STAFF WHO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

First 5 Alameda County funds hospital outreach coordinators stationed at various hospitals in the county to provide outreach, help connect high-risk prenatal and postpartum mothers to home visiting services and help enroll them in Medi-Cal. This type of position is traditionally difficult to fund because it does not support direct services administered by hospital staff. First 5 Alameda County has been able to draw down sufficient Medi-Cal Administrative Activities funding to support the outreach coordinators.

- **Filling Service Gaps.** Searching for a sustainable funding source to support its investments in early childhood services is a priority. Yet F5AC continues to fund direct services that fill critical gaps in the county’s early childhood system, especially where other funding sources or fiscal leveraging opportunities are not available.

Through its Community Grants program, F5AC encourages grantees to fill gaps in services or enhance the quality of services. For example, F5AC supports several community-based organizations that offer parent-child playgroups as a school readiness strategy for children with social-emotional disabilities. It also funds parent education programs that support child growth and development. Services for parents, in particular, are difficult to fund, because few categorical funding sources specifically target these activities.

Through its Quality Counts child care grants program, F5AC provides emergency grants and start-up facility grants to qualified early care and education providers. Because of their relatively small size, many child care programs can be overwhelmed when dealing with expenses that result from unexpected emergency repairs, such as replacement of a roof or boiler. The commission provides funding to help these organizations maintain their services without disruption to the families and children who rely on them.

The 2013–2015 Community Grants program featured three levels of awards: Community Support Grants ($15,000–$40,000), Targeted Grants ($41,000–$120,000) and Neighborhood Partnership Grants ($41,000–$130,000). Community Support and Targeted Grants were awarded to projects and programs that meet identified community needs. Only libraries and parks and recreation departments were eligible for Neighborhood Partnership Grants; grantees must provide family-centered school readiness activities.13

- **Investing in Infrastructure and Data Systems.** Long-term investments in developing data systems have laid the groundwork for better program coordination, use of standardized tools and monitoring of program fidelity across multiple service domains. For example, First 5 Alameda County’s ECChange and Pathways, two Web-based, cross-agency program information systems, enable staff in different provider organizations to access the same client-level data to ensure their programs and services are mutually supportive.

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F5AC also developed ECC Online, the Web-based database that supports F5AC grantee and contractor reporting, along with the Training Institute and the Community Grants, Child Development Corps and Quality Enhancement Services programs. This database enhances F5AC’s performance-based contracting system.

Most of Alameda County’s community-based organizations find it difficult to establish their own evaluation and data infrastructure. Prop 10 funding provides significant flexibility that has enabled F5AC to bridge this funding gap. Besides its investments in data systems, the commission has supported program evaluations to track and measure performance.

Yet, even for organizations such as F5AC that are relatively well funded, limitations exist on what these investments can accomplish. For example, the high cost of implementing randomized control experiments and other rigorous research methods has limited F5AC’s ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs it funds. The challenge in funding high-quality program evaluations is exacerbated at the federal level by the high thresholds for demonstrating best practice and promising practices.

STRATEGIC FINANCING ORIENTATION: KEYS TO SUCCESS

First 5 Alameda County enacts its strategic financing plan through its annual budget. The annual budget is carefully designed to mirror the four-year strategic plan. Communities interested in financing multi-sector, place-based systems can look to First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) as a model and take these steps:

Tightly align financing strategies to program strategies. When planning, F5AC aligns program and financing strategies by answering two simple but critical questions: What strategy will meet this goal? How will we pay for it?

Leave no money on the table. First 5 Alameda County and its partners carefully monitor the federal, state and philanthropic funding landscape, applying for grants and leveraging entitlement and reimbursement funds as opportunities arise.

Provide training and technical assistance, as necessary. In some cases, First 5 Alameda County must provide training, technical assistance and/or infrastructure investment to operationalize financing opportunities. In considering which financing strategies to enact, F5AC carefully weighs necessary up-front costs against revenue potential to decide whether “the juice is worth the squeeze.”
**Broad Base of Community Support**

A broad base of community support is vital to the long-term sustainability of multi-sector, place-based initiatives and it can buffer organizations and programs through challenging times. Leaders who successfully attract strong support from the families they serve, community leaders and other neighborhood residents, know whose support is needed and develop appropriate outreach efforts and vehicles for community engagement. (See Broad Base of Community Support: Keys to Success on page 36.)

F5AC works in close partnership across county and community agencies to improve outcomes for children ages 0–5. The commission has successfully cultivated a broad base of community support, including strong relationships with key stakeholders in the community, which has helped it contribute to a thriving early childhood system in Alameda County. F5AC has earned respect and support for its work through its participation in collaborative bodies to address significant policy and practice issues (e.g., the Alameda Interagency Policy Council); through its capacity-building and training efforts; and through its development of communications and marketing plans to build its brand and identity in the community.

**FACILITATING COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION**

One of the more recent partnerships in Alameda County is the Interagency Children’s Policy Council. Council leadership includes the directors of all child- and youth-serving agencies in the county, including health, housing, education, child welfare and juvenile justice. While the council initially focused largely on issues related to school-age children, First 5 Alameda County has been influential in getting the council to elevate early childhood issues to the top of its agenda. Recent topics the council has addressed include how to measure collective impact, including developing common outcome measures; share data across agencies and sectors; leverage federal funding such as Medi-Cal; and align funding using a children’s budget.

Convening Collaborative Groups. F5AC is recognized as a critical force in fostering collaboration on early childhood issues (see Facilitating Collaboration and Coordination above). During its most recent strategic planning process, F5AC conducted interviews with key stakeholders to inform its planning. They frequently cited F5AC’s leadership role in bringing together various county agencies, community-based organizations and other stakeholders as its most effective and most important role.14 Areas where F5AC was seen as particularly effective by its peers included its role in creating a shared vision for early childhood; developing policy recommendations; engaging in advocacy on behalf of children and families; and developing consensus on common goals, performance measures, tools, data collection and reporting.

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Communicating and Marketing the Importance of Early Childhood. F5AC, like many community-based initiatives, is well known and well respected in the early childhood community. It is less well known to other stakeholders, such as business leaders, who might support efforts to improve child and family outcomes in the county. To be successful, early childhood leaders must target messages about the value and outcomes of early learning to critical audiences, including funders, the business community, parents and parent groups and others. F5AC recently hired a communications specialist who will help build brand awareness of F5AC and communicate its core messages.

BROAD BASE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT: KEYS TO SUCCESS

Community support plays an important role in the sustainability of an initiative in good times and bad. With strong community support, place-based initiatives can become a central focus for community organizing and resident empowerment that generates deep loyalty. That loyalty can help buffer the initiative in difficult periods when fiscal challenges and changes in political leadership occur. Following are keys to success for building a broad base of community support:

Participate in collaborative planning groups. Most communities have different collaborative planning groups focusing on the needs of specific populations. First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) participates in many collaborative planning groups in the community to ensure its actions align and support the efforts of other organizations and initiatives. It also engages county leaders, families and other residents in F5AC planning and priority-setting so broad ownership for the initiative is created.

Share results. Internal and external stakeholders need to see and understand the impact of their investments and efforts to support young children and families. First 5 Alameda County’s sophisticated data systems, including ECChange and Pathways, enable leaders to track outcomes and see progress toward desired results for individual children and families and for the population countywide. Consequently, F5AC can share information in strategic ways to congratulate success, highlight emerging needs and concentrate energies on key areas of program development and organizational capacity-building.

Market the importance of the work. First 5 Alameda County has hired a communications specialist who is working to market both the importance of attending to the development of children ages 0–5 as well as the impact the initiative has on the population in Alameda County. F5AC can target messages to key stakeholders to help build and sustain a strong base of community support. Its website features a new *It’s all about results* page that provides a quick snapshot of best practices and results across goal areas.*


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Ability to Adapt to Changing Conditions and Contexts

The most successful initiatives have leaders who are adept at anticipating, influencing and effectively responding to new opportunities or threats in their environment (e.g., by taking advantage of new funding opportunities or surviving a political transition). Adapting to changing conditions and contexts involves keeping abreast of current research in the field as well as of data on the economic, demographic and social conditions in the community. It also means contributing to and helping shape policy at the local, state and national levels (see Ability to Adapt to Changing Conditions and Contexts: Keys to Success on page 40).16

For several years, the most significant strategic focus of F5AC has been adapting to the changing fiscal context in which the initiative was created and has developed during the past decade. That is the real story to be told in this case study. Staying true to its mission and vision while adjusting and changing its financial strategies has been critical to First 5 Alameda County’s continuing success and sustainability. Yet adapting to changing fiscal conditions and declining revenue is not the only way F5AC has demonstrated its adaptability and nimbleness.

Implementing Best Practices and Research-Based Approaches. F5AC staff members stay abreast of merging scientific evidence on early child development and its implications for designing programs and services to enhance young children’s growth and development and improve school readiness. They use this information as the basis for taking steps to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of programs and services. For example, F5AC was a leader in integrating health and mental health services in early childhood programs and it did so well before programs such as Project LAUNCH were developed and replicated nationally.

F5AC has been a leader in California and nationally in testing and implementing best practices in services and supports for families. The organization has been at the forefront of a national effort to develop multi-sector, place-based systems that integrate health, mental health, early care and education and other family support services so parents can easily access and navigate the programs and assistance their children need to thrive. Help Me Grow is one example of how F5AC’s investments in system-building helped lay the groundwork for future opportunities and outside investment (see Sharing Implementation Lessons Learned: Help Me Grow on page 38).

Research Question Addressed in This Section:
What conditions changed that caused this initiative to change its financing strategies and approaches?

“From the beginning, [the commission] knew it had a declining revenue source and had to rely on partner organizations to support and carry out its work.”

– Mark Friedman
Chief Executive Officer
First 5 Alameda County

First 5 Alameda County became part of a consortium to support statewide replication of the Help Me Grow model in 2011. Prior to Alameda County’s participation in the Help Me Grow National Replication Project, the commission provided funding to implement a children’s Screening, Assessment, Referral and Treatment (SART) system. Alameda County was chosen as a lead partner in California’s Help Me Grow replication efforts due to the robust infrastructure developed with funding from First 5 Alameda County.

Through SART, the county developed a central service access point via a phone Linkage Line. Additionally, the county was already implementing a family navigator program to help families access services and understand and manage their child’s care. In implementing SART, the county identified funding through the California Child Health and Disability Prevention Program to help support the Linkage Line and to train medical providers on screening and referral. These early investments helped position First 5 Alameda County and its partners to be chosen as a statewide replication site and, ultimately, leverage additional investments for this work.

F5AC’s participation and leadership in several national initiatives, including home visiting, Help Me Grow and Promise Neighborhoods, reflect the initiative’s goals to coordinate multiple county agencies and community-based organizations in developing an integrated early childhood system. A description of some of the best practice models and initiatives in which F5AC is a partner or lead organization is provided in Table 2.

### TABLE 2: MODELS AND INITIATIVES IN WHICH FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Role of F5AC</th>
<th>Partner Organizations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Connections</td>
<td>Promotes the well-being of children ages 0–5 who are at risk for or have social, emotional, behavioral, and related developmental concerns.</td>
<td>Funder</td>
<td>- Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (lead)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>- United Advocates for Children and Families</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lead Agency</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Me Grow</td>
<td>Provides early identification and referral to supports for children ages 0-5 with developmental, behavioral, and/or social-emotional concerns and their families.</td>
<td>Funder</td>
<td>- Alameda County Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>- Child Health and Disability Prevention Program</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Assistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lead Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home Visiting</td>
<td>Funds county and community agencies to provide prenatal and postpartum home visiting services targeting teen parents, high-risk families, and families whose babies have been in the neonatal intensive care unit.</td>
<td>Funder</td>
<td>- Alameda County Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project LAUNCH</td>
<td>Promotes the wellness of young children ages 0–8 in selected states and communities nationwide.</td>
<td>Funder</td>
<td>- The California Endowment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>- East Oakland Building Healthy Communities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assistance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hayward Promise Neighborhood Initiative</td>
<td>Aims to ensure children have access to effective schools and strong support systems that will enable them to complete their secondary education and to successfully transition to college or postsecondary training; part of the national Promise Neighborhood project.</td>
<td>Funder</td>
<td>- City of Hayward</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>- California State University (lead)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assistance</td>
<td>- Community Child Care Council of Alameda County</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lead Agency</td>
<td>- Eden Area ROP</td>
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</table>
Aligning Home Visiting Programs Across Agencies and Providers. F5AC’s earliest effort to convene stakeholders to support a shared vision for an integrated early childhood system was also one of its most successful. Shared outcomes for home visiting services were developed, along with a data system for tracking client-level information for families who receive home visiting services. When the Alameda County First 5 Commission and staff became interested in this issue, home visiting services consisted of several fragmented programs with little coordination or shared vision for how to collectively plan, manage and measure the impact of the work. F5AC pioneered an effort to require all home visiting programs it funded to report on common outcomes through its Web-based ECChange system.

While Alameda County and F5AC have long invested in home visiting programs, new federal funds through the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program are available to expand existing home visiting efforts. To take advantage of this new funding opportunity, F5AC helped start the county’s Family Support Home Visiting (FS/HV) System of Care Initiative. As part of the FS/HV initiative, the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) and F5AC convened a group of participating home visiting program leaders, along with other key partners, to coordinate and integrate both the services they offer and the way they measure their impact in the community.

Now the Family Support Home Visiting System of Care Initiative is moving past planning to implementation and scaling up. F5AC is transitioning all the home visiting contracts it oversees to Family Health Services within ACPHD. F5AC will continue to provide training, data and evaluation support and other infrastructure needs, but it will no longer directly fund home visiting programs. By nurturing a strong coalition among partners, including community-based providers of home visiting services, F5AC laid the groundwork for ACPHD to assume primary responsibility for delivering and finding funding for home visiting services that are an integral aspect of the county’s early childhood system.
ABILIT Y TO ADAPT TO CHANGING CONDITIONS AND CONTEXTS: KEYS TO SUCCESS

The political, economic, demographic and cultural context in which a multi-sector, place-based initiative operates is constantly evolving and changing. Successful organizations and initiatives pay close attention to changing community needs as well as changing federal and state fiscal conditions that can positively and negatively impact its sustainability. Following are keys to success related to being adaptable to changing conditions:

React strategically to declining revenues. First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) confronts its declining revenues head on. It regularly reviews revenue projections, actively pursues opportunities to garner additional resources and transparently shares financial information with stakeholders and the public.

Track federal, state and philanthropic funding trends. F5AC carefully tracks federal, state and philanthropic funding opportunities and pursues them aggressively when it makes good strategic sense. It also has altered its role and approach during the past several years to position county agencies and community organizations to support and sustain critical programs and services. This strategic outlook and approach enables the commission and staff to make the most of emerging policy, program and funding opportunities and to avoid some of the negative effects of economic and political changes.

Keep abreast of emerging scientific findings and the implications for programs and services. First 5 Alameda County carefully reviews emerging research detailing effective and efficient approaches for meeting the needs of young children and their families. It uses research to refine its strategic programs, services and management approaches to optimize results.

Strong Internal Systems

Quality programs thrive and grow in high-performing organizations that have well-developed internal management systems. Accordingly, F5AC has focused directly on boosting the capacity of its partners to become high-performing agencies and organizations (see Strong Internal Systems: Keys to Success on page 42).

Grants and Contracts Management. For organizations such as F5AC that issue numerous grants and contracts to community-based organizations and public agencies, an efficient fiscal operations team is critical to successful management. The contracts and grants administrator is a key member of the leadership team and participates in program planning and oversight. F5AC has a streamlined contracting protocol and staff members can process funding requests and awards more quickly than many government agencies. Program staff work collaboratively with the evaluation staff to monitor and review data and outcomes from active performance-based contracts. Additionally, contracts and grants typically run for no more than one year or, at most, two years. Although the short duration can be a burden for contracted agencies, it enables F5AC to respond quickly to changing community needs, adding or discontinuing services as appropriate. To counteract the negative aspects of these short funding periods, awards are forward-funded, making a limited amount of the award available to cover program start-up costs.
Human Resources Management.
Managing the human resources needs of a large organization dedicated to supporting the development and full-scale operation of a multi-sector, early childhood support system is a significant and complex undertaking. Operating in an environment of financial constraint and decreasing revenues makes management even more complicated. F5AC has created an approach to human resources and staffing that is flexible and enables staff members to adapt to changing fiscal and political conditions. Most employees have full-time positions in F5AC's offices. However, employees in positions that demand a high level of community outreach and integration are sometimes outstationed in organizations across the county. Outstationed staff members typically work full time and are employed by F5AC. They work on site and within the structure of partner organizations to provide services or train their staff on new service delivery models. Over time, it is expected that the host organization will assume responsibility for that staff position and the outstationed staff member will become an employee of the partner organization.

This creative sharing of human and financial resources has proven to be an effective way to influence policy and strategy change across the county to achieve strategic goals. F5AC has used this outstationing approach effectively from its inception, when the agency worked collaboratively with county agencies to complete fiscal leveraging plans, provide trainings and create relationships with the county Medi-Cal point of contact. F5AC uses this approach to support five hospital outreach coordinators at two hospitals to help families and children with risk factors access needed services.

Data Systems. High capacity, user-friendly data systems are essential for evidence-based initiatives that are focused on achieving measurable results. ECChange enables F5AC to collect and analyze comprehensive data on the use of programs and services and resulting outcomes for children and families. By providing grantees and contracted agencies free access to the data system as well as help desk support and technical assistance, F5AC enables its partners to realize significant internal systems cost savings.

"The hiring process in county government can be quite lengthy. Because of its unique status as a quasi-governmental organization, First 5 is able to hire more quickly and has the flexibility to create positions that do not fit neatly into the county hiring system but are urgently needed."

– Janet Basta
Human Resources Administrator
First 5 Alameda County
STRONG INTERNAL SYSTEMS: KEYS TO SUCCESS

Strong internal systems such as financial and contract management and human resources are key to high-performing organizations. They provide the foundation for stable, high-quality programs and services. First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) has invested significant resources and energy in developing its own internal systems and in boosting the capacity of its partners to manage effectively and efficiently. Following are keys to success related to internal systems:

**Align contract management and program management functions.** At F5AC, contract management and program management functions are aligned and support each other. Contracts are structured to be one to two years in duration and afford the commission and staff flexibility to respond to emerging needs with new programs and services and to discontinue programs that fail to meet performance targets.

**Create robust data systems.** ECChange, Pathways and ECC Online are supportive comprehensive data systems that serve two distinct but equally critical roles – to monitor contract performance and to provide data and information on the achievement of goals and indicators. Participation in these data systems is free to partner organizations and affords access to rich, timely data to support internal program and management decisions and external reporting to funders and the public.

**Sound financial management systems.** Strong financial management is essential to ensure adequate funding is available when it is needed and to safeguard funds against mismanagement. F5AC has instituted sound financial management systems that include effective planning and budgeting, accounting, internal controls, reporting and audit functions to efficiently manage the flow of funds from the state and other funders to the county agencies and community-based organizations providing programs and services. It also has invested in boosting the capacity of its partners to design and implement sound financial management processes, procedures and practices in their own organizations.
Key Findings and Lessons Learned

In this case study, staff from The Finance Project describe key components of the First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) multi-sector, place-based initiative for young children and their families. The case study also reveals how F5AC has addressed significant financing and sustainability challenges. What emerges are valuable findings and lessons learned that can help strengthen ongoing efforts in Alameda County; inform the work of other Children’s Outcomes Project network initiatives; and help early childhood leaders in other communities nationwide who are striving to create and sustain intensive, multi-sector early childhood initiatives.

Details on the context, conditions and policies that have affected F5AC’s success provide insight to answer questions such as these: What do successful place-based health and development initiatives look like on the ground and in action? What conditions, circumstances and contexts are critical to this work?

Deeper analysis of the unique attributes and characteristics that played a distinct role in the development and sustainability of F5AC can help answer additional questions: How have these strategies been implemented? What have been the implementation pitfalls or challenges?

Taken together, these four questions can frame the key findings specific to F5AC and the lessons other communities can learn from this case study and apply to their own work.

Key Findings

Several features of F5AC’s structure, operations and management have provided a context for successfully financing and sustaining its programs and services.

Adaptation to changing budgetary and fiscal conditions. F5AC has been strategic in planning for and adapting to its declining funding base. This has required the commission to shift the emphasis of its funding priorities over time from direct service provision to capacity-building, systems-building, policy development and advocacy. In the process, F5AC has supported its partner agencies and organizations in their efforts to develop their own more diversified funding sources. One of the most important aspects of this change is F5AC’s effort to move all home visiting contracts to the county department of public health and provide data analysis and technical assistance support.

Efficient administration of public funds. F5AC has successfully implemented several creative financing strategies, including fiscal leveraging, to sustain and expand its work. The declining nature of Prop 10 funds – the primary revenue supporting First 5 programs across California – as well as continuing state and local budgetary pressures, have incentivized F5AC to operate efficiently and thoughtfully align financing strategies and funding sources with programmatic, infrastructure and capacity-building needs.
Role as a neutral broker. F5AC is a respected neutral broker in the county. The commission is not regarded as a competitor with its partners. Neither is it seen as favoring the interests and needs of some communities or families over others, or the interests of some county agencies or particular community-based organizations over others. As a result, F5AC is able to convene leaders from county agencies and nonprofit organizations, as well as public- and private-sector funders, to work collaboratively. This has led to the successful implementation of many quality programs and services tailored to the needs of the county’s young children and families.

Flexible governance and funding structure. F5AC is a quasi-governmental agency with a large pool of funding under its control that is not restricted to specific programs and services. Unlike more established agencies and traditional mission-oriented nonprofit organizations that operate single-service programs using categorical funding sources, F5AC can use unrestricted Prop 10 funds to quickly develop and implement strategies in response to changing conditions and emerging needs among children and families in the county. This flexibility, coupled with a strategic focus on outcomes rather than defined program categories, enables F5AC to fill existing service gaps, including services that may require collaboration across multiple agencies. Additionally, F5AC is able to be nimble and responsive in the contracting process within the confines of its own procurement policies and procedures.

Investment in building the capacity of community partners. F5AC relies on its partner agencies and organizations to directly manage programs and deliver services. Therefore, the success of First 5 is largely determined by the strength and capacity of these community partners. The First 5 Alameda County Commission and staff have made strengthening the management capacity and internal systems of partner agencies and organizations a high priority. They have accomplished this goal by providing or funding technical infrastructure and supports, including systems for collecting, reporting and sharing data; and by providing technical assistance to providers on technical management and fiscal issues, such as how to seek and receive reimbursement for Medicaid-eligible services.

Lessons Learned

This case study reveals that, since its creation following the passage of Prop 10 in 1998, F5AC has developed and thrived by designing and implementing four key sustainability strategies: focus on fiscal leveraging to address declining revenue; drive systems change to achieve ambitious outcomes; build community capacity to support systems change through strategic investment; and remain steadfastly data-driven and outcomes-focused. With or without a large dedicated funding stream such as Prop 10, these approaches can be modeled and replicated by other multi-sector, place-based prevention and early intervention initiatives across the nation.
Focus on fiscal leveraging to address declining revenue. To expand and extend the impact of Prop 10 funds in the community, F5AC developed an aggressive approach to fiscal leveraging with explicit goals for itself and partner organizations. Initially, the commission and staff researched and pursued promising opportunities for fiscal leveraging at the county level using other federal and state funding sources. By adopting a transparent approach to sharing information on the results of this initial fiscal leveraging work, community partners became excited by the possibilities for their own organization. F5AC offered technical assistance and support to its grantees, contractors and partners to increase their capacity to obtain additional funding to sustain services. F5AC conducts a fiscal assessment of all core funded programs and requires its community grants recipients to assess fiscal leveraging potential during the funded term.

Drive systems change to achieve ambitious outcomes. F5AC controls a large, flexible funding stream and, therefore, it is in a unique position to drive systems change. As a quasi-governmental organization, it has the freedom to try new approaches and test innovative strategies to improve community outcomes for children ages 0–5 and their families. Prop 10 funds have few restrictions on their use, so First Five Alameda County often takes advantage of this flexibility by allocating funds to pilot new and promising programs and approaches in the community. F5AC has embraced this role and, over time, it has delivered on this promise and generated confidence in its innovation and approaches.

Build community capacity to support systems change through strategic investment. F5AC backs up its innovative approaches to driving systems change by investing its funds strategically in county agencies and community-based organizations that can produce results. F5AC leadership and staff members have supported innovative ideas and approaches by investing strategically in programs, supports and services to achieve desired outcomes effectively and efficiently. F5AC is not constrained by categorical funding. This enables the commission, for example, to pilot test new ideas and approaches and outstation F5AC staff in county agencies and grantee organizations to support and change staff practice. Over time, pilot programs have developed other sources of revenue and have become ongoing resources to county children and families. Similarly, outstationed F5AC staff members have become regular employees of their host organizations.

Remain steadfastly data-driven and outcomes-focused. F5AC embraces a results-based accountability approach to all its work. Investments in programs, services, infrastructure and capacity-building are directly focused on achieving desired results. The commission collaboratively sets accountability standards for itself and its partner organizations and has developed an online data collection site, ECC Online, to track progress toward these standards. F5AC takes a transparent approach to tracking and reporting data. Partners and stakeholders can access information that is clear and targeted to their needs for tracking progress toward desired outcomes. The commission takes progress towards results seriously – grant agreements are only one year in duration and are not guaranteed to be renewed. This helps ensure partners remain focused on delivering quality services, achieving stated results and positively impacting population outcomes.
The context in California is unique, because Prop 10 provides a large and dedicated, albeit declining, income stream to support multi-sector county systems for children ages 0–5. F5AC has been forward-thinking, strategic and bold in its approach to designing an effective infrastructure to manage these funds, however. Simply put, F5AC has succeeded in implementing large-scale systems change in its county as a result of specific management and financing behaviors and characteristics.

**Conclusion**

F5AC has met a number of financing and sustainability challenges head on, not the least of which is its reliance on Prop 10 funds, a declining income stream. Knowing that a “sin tax” is designed to change behavior, in this case decrease tobacco use, F5AC has been strategic in identifying other funding streams to replace Prop 10 revenues. The commission has worked very successfully with its community-based partners to leverage Medi-Cal reimbursement funds. These reimbursement funds, in combination with philanthropic investment, have decreased the commission’s reliance solely on Prop 10 funds to sustain direct service investments.

The public and philanthropic funds supporting F5AC total almost $14 million* annually. The commission is under pressure to demonstrate accountability for the investment of these public funds. Additionally, in the past several years of tight local and state budgets, this large bucket of public funds has, at times, drawn the attention of legislators and policy makers trying to fill budget and funding gaps. F5AC continues to use data and compelling messages to clearly communicate the benefit of this investment to the entire Alameda County community. F5AC continues to refine its communication materials so that they tell stories that allow listeners to grasp the importance of specific programs and services and how these services relate to children’s lives. The commission has a commitment to communicating the results of its work in a clear and compelling way that enables families, community leaders, funders and taxpayers to link investments to children’s and community outcomes.

*The $14 million is comprised of public and philanthropic funds that support F5AC. A total of $20 million is reflective of funds in the entire system, as shown in Figure 2.
# APPENDICES

*Appendix A: Family Resource Network Accountability Plan*

## Accountability Plan

**Award Recipient Name:** Family Resource Network  
**Award Cycle:** 2011-2013

### ECC Outcome:
Children have access to health, mental health, and developmental services

### Funding Priority:
**Year 2011-2012**

### Project Specific Outcome: COORDINATED SUPPORT FOR REFERRED FAMILIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Performance Target</th>
<th>Performance Target Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in interagency committees, councils and taskforces to ensure supports are family friendly and reflective of families’ concerns</td>
<td>4-6 opportunities</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to Children’s SART resource data by providing and updating eligibility and service information in the Family Navigation Protocols and directly to inquiring providers</td>
<td>At least 150 professionals across disciplines</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reporting Measure

- Description of interagency activities
- Description of main issues, systems gaps and barriers identified by parents
- Description of information provided to inquiring providers and professionals
- Number and type of providers served

### Project Specific Outcome: INCREASED PARENT CAPACITY AND CONFIDENCE TO CARE FOR AND ADVOCATE FOR THEIR CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Performance Target</th>
<th>Performance Target Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide parent education through outreach efforts at neighborhood / low-API school-linked settings, announcements of trainings, workshops and newsletter in appropriate languages to community providers, coordination of non-SART referrals with pediatric practices</td>
<td>400 new referrals to FRN as a result of outreach</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide short-term individualized family support to families</td>
<td>1,200 children and their families served (non-SART referrals)</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide intensive individualized Family Navigator services including parent education/consultation, guidance and support for accessing services for their child with special needs</td>
<td>85 families referred through Linkage Line assisted, per FTE</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35 cases for monthly caseload per FTE</td>
<td>First contact attempt within 2 business days</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First successful contact with families within 2-4 weeks</td>
<td>Support groups to at least father’s group, 1 group on</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Offer support groups and workshops to parents / community on topics relevant to targeted populations | Support groups to at least 1 father’s group, 1 group on | Status: Note: |
### Reporting Measure

Number of families referred to FRN by language, race/ethnicity of child, city, age of child, primary diagnoses:

**Description of FRN outreach efforts:**

Number of families referred who 1) receive home or hospital visits 2) are accompanied to service or treatment planning meetings in health, early intervention and special education (IEPs, IFSPs, hospital discharge plans) 3) are assisted to access SSI, IHSS, and other income supports 4) receive assistance for accessing Special Education and Regional Center resources 5) receive assistance to access health insurance for their child with special needs 6) receiving additional support:

**Number of families referred for individualized services (Pathways)**

**Number of days from referral to Family Navigation to first contact attempt (Pathways)**

**Number of days from referral to Family Navigation to first successful contact with families (Pathways)**

**Percent of families unable to contact by reason of case closure without contact (Pathways)**

**Number of families served / visited by language used during individualized consults, race/ethnicity of child, city, age of child, risk factors, and primary reason(s) for referral (Pathways)**

**Description of location, target populations served and attendance at each support group and workshop (Attendance records):**

**Summary of highlighted information (e.g., needs, barriers, lessons learned, successes) discussed during support groups and workshops (Surveys)**

### Project Specific Outcome: EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN DIVERSE FAMILY PERSPECTIVES WITHIN SART SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES INCLUDING SERVICE DELIVERY, GOVERNANCE AND EVALUATION TO FURTHER THE SART SYSTEM MISSION AND ENSURE FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICE DELIVERY

#### Strategy

- Conduct trainings for family members and governance partners on parent/professional partnerships and other topics to support family member participation in governance
- Support consistent and meaningful family member participation through a variety of methods (i.e. communication and follow-up, coaching and mentoring as needed, etc.)
- Support the organization and facilitation of a Family Advisory Committee
- Designate a representative from FRN to participate in the Early Connections Family Leadership Action Team to help facilitate coordination and integration between SART and Early Connections

#### Performance Target | Performance Target Status
---|---
2-5 trainings provided to family members and/or governance partners | Status: Note: |
2-4 hours per month | Status: Note: |
FAC charter developed by September 30, 2011 | Status: Note: |
FRN designee attends monthly meetings of the Early Connections Family Leadership Team | Status: Note: |

### Reporting Measure

Number of family members participating in Family Leadership activities by language, race/ethnicity of parent, city, age of child (survey)

Summary of highlighted information (e.g., needs, barriers, lessons learned, successes) discussed during Family Advisory Committee (meeting notes)

Description of lessons learned in involving family members in leadership and governance
### Project Specific Outcome: INCREASED NUMBER OF CHILDREN ABLE TO ACCESS INTERVENTION/SUPPORT SERVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and train Family Navigation service providers with capacity to serve in English, Spanish and at least one Asian language (Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese or Cambodian) to meet diverse language and culture of Alameda County families</td>
<td>2 FTE staff identified and trained</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompany SART families to referrals for IEP, IFSP and IPP meetings, as appropriate</td>
<td>100% of referred families attend appointments and meetings, as appropriate</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide feedback to referring provider on result of family navigation services</td>
<td>All SART families referred for family navigation have feedback sent to referring providers</td>
<td>Status: Note:</td>
</tr>
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### Reporting Measure
- Result of referrals to community supports and resources, by type of resource (Pathways): 1) Individual / family therapy 2) OPT / PT 3) Speech and language 4) Parenting classes / support groups 5) SSI, IHSS, Medi-Cal, other public benefits 6) Medical appointments 7) Hospital discharge planning 8) Other, please specify
- Percent of children who complete IEP, IFSP, IPP within 9 months (Pathways)
- Number of feedback forms recorded (Pathways)
- Number of contacts with referring providers (Pathways)

### Supporting Documents

#### Year 2012-2013

### Project Specific Outcome: COORDINATED SUPPORT FOR REFERRED FAMILIES

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### Reporting Measure
- Description of interagency activities
- Description of main issues, systems gaps and barriers identified by parents
- Description of information provided to inquiring providers and professionals
- Number and type of providers served

### Project Specific Outcome: INCREASED PARENT CAPACITY AND CONFIDENCE TO CARE FOR AND ADVOCATE FOR THEIR CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
## Strategy

Provide parent education through outreach efforts at neighborhood / low-API school-linked settings, announcements of trainings, workshops and newsletter in appropriate languages to community providers, coordination of non-SART referrals with pediatric practices

Provide short-term individualized family support to families

Provide intensive individualized Family Navigator services including parent education/consultation, guidance and support for accessing services for their child with special needs

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### Reporting Measure

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Number of families referred for individualized services (Pathways)

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Description of location, target populations served and attendance at each support group and workshop (Attendance records):

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### Project Specific Outcome

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**Reporting Measure**

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- Percent of children who complete IEP, IFSP, IPP within 9 months (Pathways)
- Number of feedback forms recorded (Pathways)
- Number of contacts with referring providers (Pathways)

**Supporting Documents**

- Support Groups & Workshops Data
- Demographics
Appendix B: First 5 Alameda County Data Sharing Agreement

FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY ECCHANGE AND PATHWAYS DATA SHARING AGREEMENT

Introduction

ECCHANGE PARTNER MEETINGS

On October 16, 2003, an ECChange data sharing meeting was convened that was attended by the following ECChange partners: Sheila Proctor (ACPH), Sonya Velasquez (TVHC), Arthur Hall (TPC), TJ Johnson (ACPHD-SS), Alison Pulice (ACPHD-SS), Gina Hernandez (TPC), Surry Bunnell (CHO-SS), Sue Greenwald (SS), Dan Delaney (Deloitte Consulting) and Deborrah Bremond, Carla Keener, Chris Hwang, June Allen and Teddy Milder of Every Child Counts.

On June 29, 2005, rules for data sharing during file clearance and search were reviewed and accepted by ECChange partners who attended the Annual Super-User Meeting and included: Sheila Proctor (ACPH), Raquel Aguayo-Riffel (ACPHN), Jan Wolkenhauer (ACPHD-SS), Alison Pulice (ACPHD-SS), Mary-Anne Belchik (City of Berkeley PHN) Andrea Willis (FSSBA), Greta Fillingim (La Familia), Sharon Aminy (La Familia), Beth Hoch (Alameda Family Services), Sonya Velasquez (TVHC), Barbara McCullough (TPC), Gina Hernandez (TPC), Roy Stotts (TPC), Anita Helvie (TPC), Surry Bunnell (CHO-SS), Colleen Cady (CHO) and Deborrah Bremond, Carla Keener, Judy Jones, Lisa Borromeo, Chris Hwang, June Allen and Teddy Milder of Every Child Counts First 5 Alameda County.

On May 25, 2011, a meeting was held to review data sharing rules for ECChange file clearance and search features; confirm the ability to use the file clearance feature between ECChange and Pathways Referral System; discuss access to client information in ECChange in support of confidentiality and data security best practices. ECChange partners who attended the meeting included: Claudia Del Rio (TVHC), Amber Daniels (La Familia), Surry Bunnell (CHO-SS), Christina Malin (ACPHD), Jan Wolkenhauer (ACPHD-SS), Angela Ball (ACPHD-Nursing), Greta Fillingim (La Familia), Alma Alfie (FSSBA), Georgeann Morten (ACPHD-SS), Amy Blackshaw (Brighter Beginnings), Gumaro Garay (SSA) and Melanie Toledo, Carla Keener, Anna Gruver, Loren Farrar, Beth Hoch, Chris Hwang and June Allen of First 5 Alameda County.

ECChange Background

ECChange is the web-based, cross-agency information system developed by First 5 Alameda County to track and monitor services delivered to children and families by First 5 and partner agencies and to inform the First 5 Alameda County accountability framework. Partner agencies also use ECChange to support their own agency programs and case management needs. By serving as an integration tool, ECChange facilitates partner agencies to provide unduplicated quality services to clients.
First 5 partner agencies currently using ECChange include:

- Early Childhood Mental Health
- Prenatal Home Visits
- Post Partum Home Visits
- Child Development and Mental Health Services for Project LAUNCH
- Intensive Family Support Services including:
  - Special Start
  - Teen Services
  - Another Road to Safety (ARS)
  - Specialty Provider Team
  - Your Family Counts
- Hospital Outreach Referrals for Perinatal Home Based programs
- School Readiness – Pre-K Summer Program

In addition to First 5, partner agencies using ECChange include:

- Alameda County Public Health Department (Black Infant Health, Special Start, Your Family Counts, PHN)
- Alameda County Social Services Agency
- Brighter Beginnings
- Children’s Hospital Oakland Neonatal Follow-up Unit (CHO-SS)
- City of Berkeley Public Health Nursing (COB PHN)
- Family Support Services of the Bay Area (FSSBA)
- La Familia
- Prescott Joseph Center
- Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center

ECChange supports agencies to deliver unduplicated services and share pertinent, agreed-upon data on clients receiving services from more than one agency and supports partner agencies to collect and store information on clients served by non-First 5 programs.
PATHWAYS BACKGROUND
In the interest of coordinating identification, assessment and care for Alameda County children with developmental needs the Screening, Assessment, Referral and Treatment (SART) System of Care was launched in October 2009. Pathways Referral System is a client referral, tracking and follow-up system that supports SART. It is accessible to providers, county public agencies and community treatment and support programs. Initially developed to support developmental and social emotional screening, assessment, treatment and referrals for children 0 to 5 years, the system also offers family navigation intervention documentation and provider feedback by fax, email or online.

In addition to First 5, partner agencies include:

- 4 C’s of Alameda County
- Bananas
- Child Care Links
- Children’s Hospital Oakland
- City of Berkeley
- Family Resource Network
- Lifelong Medical Care – Howard Daniel Clinic
- Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center

This document describes how agencies uniquely identify clients within ECChange and Pathways and, if the client gives consents, specifies data that the partner agencies have agreed to share.

FILE CLEARANCE
The file clearance process occurs when enrolling new clients (or family/household members of a client). File clearance checks the ECChange and Pathways database for possible matches using the client’s (or client’s mother) name (name on birth certificate when known), gender, mother’s first name and date of birth to determine if the client is already known to either system.

If file clearance identifies possible matches, ECChange and Pathway will present the Enroller, Early Childhood Specialist, Case Manager, with the following client information for review: first, middle and last name (and aliases), date of birth, mother’s first name and address. The client is not required to sign the Authorizations in order to perform a file clearance.

In the ECChange ECC Enrollment, File Clearance occurs when Hospital Outreach Coordinators (HOCs) begin the enrollment process.
In the ECChange Intensive Family Support View, the Case Manager is prompted to file clear in several areas:

- When the “Add Others Known to Case and Family” feature is used
- Under the Demographics Tab in ARS and Special Start Case Management Views
- In the ECC Enrollment View for prenatal teen
- In the child case types for Teen Services
- In the Special Start Disposition View

File Clearance is also invoked when using the ECChange Lite enrollment module used by the Summer Pre-K Programs and Child Developmental and Mental Services for Project Launch. It occurs in Pathways when the SART Linkage Line Staff input and process the Referral Intake Form.

File Clearance for all users should be performed against the entire ECChange and Pathways database EXCEPT Public Health Tb and CD case types.

SEARCH FEATURE
The search feature uses logic similar to file clearance except that cases returned for viewing depend on the user profile, Consent to share/opt out section in the Authorization for Services and only include:

- Case types associated with the agency in the user’s profile
- Any case that has been assigned to a user’s agency

If there is a match when searching, information shared includes:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Case history (including case type)
- Family members (none for Pathways)
- Case manager
- Phone number

AUTHORIZATION for SERVICES
First 5 Hospital Outreach Coordinators, First 5 contractors and SART providers ask referred clients to sign a Family Health Authorization for Home Visiting Services or an Alameda County Children’s SART System of Care Authorization for Services form. In compliance with federal and state statutes and the First 5 Confidentiality Policy, the authorization allows the client to determine which partner agencies using ECChange and Pathways may share data, the type of data that will be shared if given consent, the purpose of sharing data and the right of the client to change consent status at any time. (See Attached.) Perinatal Home Visiting Services and SART services are documented in ECChange or Pathways whether or not the client gives consent to share his or her data with partner agencies. The consent process is documented in ECChange and Pathways under the Consent Tab. HIPAA Notification of Privacy Practices is given to the client during the authorization process and is also documented under the Consent tab.
An Authorization for Services expires 5 years from the signature date. The opt-out consent to share section on this form provides guidelines regarding sharing information beyond authorization expiration dates.

AN AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION MUST BE COMPLETED WHEN SHARING MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE AND HIV INFORMATION WITH ANY PROVIDER OR WHEN SHARING CLIENT INFORMATION WITH A NON-HEALTH CARE PROVIDER OR NON-ECCHANGE/PATHWAYS PARTNER AS LISTED ON PAGE 2 OF THE AUTHORIZATION FOR SERVICES (SEE ATTACHED).

The Authorization to Release and Exchange Information expires 1 year from the data of signature on the form.

Clients who are receiving services from more than one ECChange or Pathways partner agency and who consent to share data allow partner agencies to view “selected” data in order to provide unduplicated and coordinated services.

Once a case has been file cleared and the client has given consent to share, ECChange and Pathways display all agencies and case managers (with phone numbers) who provide services to the client.

Select First 5 Administrators are able to see all First 5 program data, regardless of consent to share in both ECChange and Pathways.

DATA TO BE SHARED FOR ECCHANGE
At the June 15, 2011 meeting, participants agreed to the following data sharing scenarios for ECChange (Table 1) depending on the information below:

A. If Authorization for Services consent to share section is not marked to all First 5 partners (this is an opt-out consent) and:
   1. The case is simultaneously open to more than one partner agency
   2. The case is transferred from one agency to another partner agency
   3. The case is closed to one agency and is opened to another partner agency (new case or continuing case)
If Authorization for Services consent to share section is checked to some or all First 5 partners and:

1. The client refuses to consent to share with one partnering agency, then gives consent to share with another partnering agency
   - **Demographic**: name, date of birth, gender, race/ethnicity, address, phone, health insurance, medical provider
   - **Case Summary**: dates of client contact by agency without any specific documentation of the contact, service or visit, activity summary, assessment summary or family view
   - **Referrals**: date of referral, reason for referral, agency/service referred to and follow-up comments
   - **Stressors**: selected stressors
   - **Assessment Summary**: no details of screening or score, but that screening was performed and dates
   - **Activity**: access to date and where services took place; no details of the encounter form

The information found on specific ECChange web pages for each scenario is documented in the following table.

### TABLE 1: DATA SHARING BY SCENARIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECChange Web Page</th>
<th>Scenario #A1</th>
<th>Scenario #A2</th>
<th>Scenario #A3</th>
<th>Scenario #B1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>green, if ok to share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Summary</td>
<td></td>
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<td>green, if ok to share</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stressors*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Referrals*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>green, if ok to share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growth Chart</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Immunization Chart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Protected fields and information on these ECChange web pages are not available without an Authorization of Release and Exchange Information form.

### DATA TO BE SHARED FOR PATHWAYS

At the June 15, 2011 meeting, participants agreed to the following data sharing scenario for Pathways

- Client Name
- Agency
- Case Manager/Contact Number
- Referred Date
- Case Status
- Closure Date
**APPENDIX C: FISCAL LEVERAGING ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**NAME OF AGENCY** _____________________________________________ **DATE** __________

Government Agency (county, city)  
Yes _____  No _____

Non-Profit 501C-3  
Yes _____  No _____

Other ____ Please Explain ______________________________________________________

Does your agency currently have FQHC status?  
Yes _____  No _____

1. **POPULATION** (only services provided to clients on Medi-Cal or who are eligible for Medi-Cal are reimbursable)

   What percentage of the population served by the organization as a whole are currently enrolled in Medi-Cal? _________________%

2. **ACTIVITIES** (only particular activities are reimbursable)

   Are Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA) eligible activities being performed? Check applicable activities below.

   _____ OUTREACH: Promotional activities that bring Medi-Cal eligible clients to health services. Examples are fliers, health fairs, information and referral, health outreach.

   _____ FACILITATE MEDI-CAL APPLICATION: Assisting with application, assembling needed documents, referring to eligibility workers, etc.

   _____ TRANSPORTATION: Non-emergency, non-medical transportation (M/C patients to M/C service sites)

   _____ PROGRAM PLANNING AND POLICY: Developing strategies to increase Medi-Cal system capacity and close Medi-Cal service gaps; developing resource directories of Medi-Cal services/providers

   Are Targeted Case Management (TCM) eligible activities being performed in the program? Check applicable activities below.

   _____ ASSESSMENT: Assessing client needs

   _____ CASE PLAN DEVELOPMENT: Development of a written, individualized service plan

   _____ LINKAGES: Coordination with other providers to meet client needs

   _____ ASSISTANCE AND ACCESSING SERVICES: Making appointments, arranging/providing translation/transportation

   _____ CRISIS ASSISTANCE PLANNING: Evaluate, coordinate and arrange immediate services to avoid crisis situation

   _____ PERIODIC REVIEW: Reassessment of client progress toward Individual Service Plan (ISP) goals
Check off all revenue sources for your organization:

Federal funds/grants
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

State funds/grants
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

Federal and State mixed funds/grants
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

County funds/grants
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

City funds/grants
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

Any other public funds/grants
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

Prop. 10 funds/grants
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

Private donation(s)/grants
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

Other funding sources/grants/fees
Yes ______ No ______ Amount $__________________

What is your total annual operating budget? $______________________________________________

Does your agency have an annual audit performed by a CPA
Yes ______ No ______

If no, will your agency have an annual audit performed by a CPA, if required by the MAA/TCM program(s)?
Yes ______ No ______

Comments or clarifications:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Please complete the following contact information:

Name ____________________________________ Phone ________________________________

Title ________________________________ Fax ________________________________

Address ________________________________ Email ________________________________

City, State, Zip _______________________________________________________________________

Tax ID Number ________________________________________________________________________
Site Overview

Background

In 1986, the Florida Legislature passed legislation enabling counties in the state to create special taxing districts to fund children’s services. Florida is the only state in the nation that gives communities the power to create, through local ordinance, a special taxing district focused specifically on the needs of local children and families. Voters in seven Florida counties have adopted local special districts, known as Children’s Services Councils. The councils support programs and services to improve children’s health, school readiness, school success and development and to strengthen families.

Voters approved the creation of the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County (CSC) in November 1986 and approved an increase in the millage rate cap in 2000. Funding for the CSC comes predominantly from a county ad valorem tax. The rate of levy, set by state statute, is up to 50 cents for every $1,000 of taxable property value. However, Palm Beach County, as well as Pinellas County, appealed to voters and received approval through local referendum to increase their millage caps to $1.00 per $1,000 of taxable property value. Each year, CSC members, acting as the governing board, set the millage rate. For fiscal 2012–2013, Palm Beach County’s millage rate for the CSC is .7300. This tax nets a large, flexible, dedicated funding stream for children’s services, but its future is always somewhat uncertain. The annual millage rate determination means revenues shift from year to year.

CASE STUDY FOR FINANCING AND SUSTAINING MULTI-SECTOR, PLACE-BASED INITIATIVES: CHILDREN’S SERVICES COUNCIL OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

Research Question

Addressed in This Section:
How is this COP initiative organized, structured, governed and financed?

2. Ibid.
In addition, in 2010, the Florida Legislature approved a law requiring the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County to be put on the ballot for reauthorization by 2016. The law also requires the other six CSCs to be on the ballot for approval between 2014 and 2020. Other provisions of the state law require the CSC to bear the cost of tax collection and property appraisal and to set aside a reserve within its annual operating budget to cover uncollected taxes. These costs account for less than 10 percent of total revenue. This means that more than 90 percent of special taxing district revenues are directed to maintaining a multi-sector system of care for county children and families.

**Governance**

The CSC has a 10-member governing board. Florida’s governor appoints five board members to four-year terms. The remaining members are local officials who serve in elected or appointed positions. They include the county superintendent of schools, a local school board member, the local department of children and families administrator, a juvenile court judge and a member of the board of county commissioners. The CSC holds 12 public meetings per year, including an annual planning meeting. Meeting agendas and minutes are public documents and are available on the CSC website.3

Council members play an active role in establishing the vision and guiding principles for the organization. From its inception, the CSC has focused predominantly on prevention and early intervention services. In contrast, other county and state agencies concentrate their resources on child welfare populations and deep-end treatment services for vulnerable children and youth. The initial council members created guiding principles to direct the CSC’s work, including:4

- Targeting the earliest developmental stages;
- Ensuring all actions are based on sound research and data;
- Demanding strong fiscal and program accountability from the CSC and its program partners;
- Ensuring investments net a high return; and
- Creating a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

The council has the final say on all policy-related issues. Council members approve the millage rate and approve the organization’s budget. The CSC’s chief executive officer and staff craft a strategic plan to achieve policy priorities identified by the council members.

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“CSC has had charismatic, strong leaders on the council from the beginning. The original board set clear guiding principles that have focused our work.”

– Gaetana Ebbole
Chief Executive Officer,
Children’s Services Council Palm Beach County
Strategic Planning

The guiding principles are reflected in all aspects of the CSC’s work. The council uses a results-based accountability approach to strategic planning. Senior staff members develop three-year, rolling strategic plans that align activities and funding priorities to community conditions and the council’s vision. The rolling plan is reviewed regularly to evaluate progress toward strategic goals. Mid-course corrections are made to realign priorities and funding, as needed.

This strategic approach to improving key community outcomes forms a tangible core from which services and programs are developed and funded. Following are key child outcomes:

- Babies are born healthy.
- Children are safe from neglect and abuse.
- Children are ready for kindergarten.
- Children have access to quality afterschool and summer programs.

To complement its strategic plan for community partnerships and investments, the CSC uses an internal strategic plan to guide its internal operations. In 2012, the CSC’s chief executive officer and division chiefs drafted the CEO’s Strategic Plan. The plan sets five large goals to structure the CSC’s activities and investments. As a result, the three-year rolling strategic plan and a companion three-year rolling financial plan are aligned to provide interim outcomes and benchmarks to measure progress toward the four child outcomes (also referred to as “sentinel outcomes” by funded partners and by the CSC itself). Each division of the organization has a business plan that details how it will support the achievement of these goals; each also reports progress on a monthly basis through online project management tools. Senior staff and managers meet on a monthly basis to review a data dashboard that illustrates each division’s progress and challenges toward meeting the sentinel outcomes.

Figure 1 on page 63 illustrates key organizational goals for the CSC in carrying out its mission to “enhance the lives of children and their families and enable them to attain their full potential by providing a unified context within which children’s needs can be identified and resolved by all members of the community.” These goals were developed as part of the strategic planning process and highlight the role and work of the CSC in achieving its key outcomes.
To ensure CSC managers and staff have the knowledge and capacity to implement this highly focused, organization-wide strategic plan, the CSC has invested in training and technical assistance. Staff members already have or are now participating in total quality management and continuous improvement model trainings, including Toyota’s lean philosophy and the A3 management process.5 CSC staff members have benefited from these trainings and efforts are under way to provide the same trainings to staff of local providers.
Role in the Community

Understanding that large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from isolated intervention by individual organizations, the CSC has embraced Kania and Kramer’s approach to achieving collective impact.6 The CSC acts as the backbone organization for collective impact efforts in Palm Beach County, embracing its role as a community convener. As the coordinating organization, the CSC has made strides in achieving the other four elements of collective impact by:7

- Creating a common agenda that integrates several systems toward the achievement of the organization’s mission;
- Supporting shared measurement by adding new data collection measures and creating baselines beyond what has been measured in the past;
- Pushing funded partners in providing mutually reinforcing activities that enable multiple agencies focused on specific outcomes to achieve the organization’s goal; and
- Providing continuous communication by integrating CSC and agency staff in cross-functional teams that focus on reaching shared organizational outcomes.

In 2011, the CSC developed a comprehensive logic model and theory of change called the Pathway to Early Childhood Development (see Table 1 on page 72). The organization sought to identify how funded programs and services contribute to meeting community-level child and family outcomes. The Pathway to Early Childhood Development identified key outcomes and indicators for measuring success and laid the groundwork for how the CSC would build a multi-sector system of care for early childhood.

Figure 2 on page 65 illustrates the backbone role the CSC plays in supporting a multi-sector early childhood system in Palm Beach County. The organization provides the governance necessary to achieve stakeholder participation, ensure accountability, build capacity, enhance quality and finance the system. To do this efficiently, the CSC operates as a purchaser rather than a provider of prevention and early intervention services; it aims to purchase services from programs and community organizations that best demonstrate improved child and family outcomes.

To ensure funded program results are mutually reinforcing, the CSC aligns contracts with providers to the following service systems:

- **Healthy Beginnings System** – provides comprehensive, integrated services to pregnant women, infants, young children and their families so more children are born healthy, grow up safe from abuse and neglect and are ready for school;
- **Quality Child Care System: Early Education** – provides increased access to quality early care and education so children are ready for school;
- **Quality Child Care System: Out of School** – provides increased access to quality afterschool and summer programs so children are safe and avoid summer learning loss;
- **Bridges Strategy** – connects the child, family and neighborhood to the community at-large to ensure children are healthy, safe, ready for school and on grade level at the end of third grade; and
- **Family Support and Leadership Initiatives** – gives children and families access to fundamental tools for success early in life, so more children grow up healthy, safe and strong and the community thrives.
This system provides an integrated approach to addressing the health, developmental and educational needs of Palm Beach County’s young children. The appendix highlights funded agencies and programs and shows how the programs and systems overlap and link to ensure activities are supportive and mutually reinforcing.

**Financing Structure**

The CSC’s financing structure reflects its status as a special taxing district, though it has secured other sources of revenue. The organization’s guiding principles and strategic plan guide its funding decisions.

**Revenues.** The highest percentage of the CSC’s annual revenues is derived from the *ad valorem* Children’s Services Council property tax (see Figure 3 on page 67). CSCs in Florida can operate as independent or dependent special districts. Independent districts, such as Palm Beach, can levy *ad valorem* taxes for the sole purpose of funding programs and services for children.9 Dependent districts do not have taxing authority and must rely on other sources to fund children’s services.10 Funding sources for dependent districts include county tax set-asides and CSC-created foundations.

CSCs operate on a fiscal year that runs from October 1 to September 30. Governing boards use community-level data to prioritize funding needs each year. Funds are awarded to community providers through a competitive process. CSCs cannot directly fund school district programs and cannot use funds to pay for or supplant services for children and families already funded through other means.11

In fiscal 2011–2012, the CSC’s audited revenues included:12

- Property taxes of $90.2 million;
- Grant income of $5.7 million;13 and
- Interest and miscellaneous revenue of $271,000.

Revenues are projected to be slightly higher in fiscal 2012–2013 due to an increase in tax revenue – despite the lower millage rate – as well as interest and miscellaneous income:14

- Property taxes of $91.8 million;
- Grant income of $4.9 million; and
- Interest and miscellaneous income of $800,000.

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10. Dependent Children’s Services Councils are not special districts but are departments of their respective county governments and, therefore, their budgets and funding of programs are approved by their county commission.
12. Palm Beach County CSC internal budget documents.
13. In 2011–2012, the Palm Beach County CSC received grants from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, the Florida Department of Health, and the United Way of Palm Beach County.
14. Palm Beach County CSC internal budget documents.
Expenditures. Most of the Palm Beach CSC’s revenues (84 percent in fiscal 2011–2012) support grants to organizations that provide direct services to children and families. The 2011–2012 audited financial statement shows the following breakdown in expenditures:15

- Children’s Programs Direct Services: $83.1 million
  - Maternal and Child Health Services: $29.7 million
  - Quality Care and Education: $39.3 million
  - Family Support Services: $8.0 million
  - Special Funds and Initiatives: $6.1 million
- Children’s Program Support Services: $7.1 million
- Administrative and General: $6.2 million
- Nonoperating Expenses: $2.0 million

Nonoperating expenses are the resources used to cover the Palm Beach County tax collector and property appraiser fees, which must be paid from the total ad valorem tax revenues collected. Additionally, by statute, the CSC must set aside a contingency in its annual budget to account for uncollected taxes.

Funding Outlook. Almost all states have experienced declining tax revenues since 2008 and Florida is no exception. A depressed economy, high unemployment, declining property values and a broad political backlash against taxes of any kind have created uncertain times for Florida’s special taxing districts. The state legislature is requiring that all Children’s Services Councils be reviewed and approved by referendum by 2020. The timing and the outcome of the Palm Beach County referendum are uncertain. Despite this uncertainty, the CSC remains committed to sustaining its work and ensuring children in the community are healthy, safe and strong.

Financing and Sustainability Challenges

The Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County (CSC) benefits from a dedicated and flexible funding stream that supports diverse programs and services for local children and families. However, the CSC faces several challenges to future financing and sustainability, including:

- Securing voter approval for continue funding;
- Communicating the CSC’s role to key stakeholders;
- Showing the social return on investment;
- Ensuring accountability among contracted providers;
- Balancing accountability and system capacity-building; and
- Continuing to leverage other funding.

Securing Voter Approval for Continued Funding

The CSC has relied on revenues generated through its status as a special taxing district to build a multi-sector system of prevention and early intervention services for children and families. However, state legislation approved in 2010 means the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County will be put on the ballot for reauthorization in 2014 or 2016. This public referendum process creates special circumstances.

The challenge facing the board and staff is convincing local taxpayers that the CSC adds significant value worthy of special taxation. To meet this challenge, the CSC needs to demonstrate it is accountable for tax revenues and to make a strong case that its work is essential to improve the health and well-being of the county’s young children and families.

Communicating the CSC’s Role to Key Stakeholders

By all accounts, the CSC has achieved success and positively impacted the lives of thousands of children and families in the county since its creation in 1986. Yet many county residents are unaware of the CSC’s accomplishments. Communicating the work of the CSC in a clear and compelling way that families, community leaders, funders and taxpayers can understand and remember is an ongoing challenge. This is not surprising given the diverse programs and services supported by the CSC and the complexity of its work. While residents may be well aware of the neighborhood clinic, the home visitation program and the child care program, they may not understand the role the CSC has played in initiating these programs, providing funding, ensuring quality services and tracking results.

Showing the Social Return on Investment

A further challenge in developing a clear and compelling message is to connect the results of CSC investments to the impact those investments have on children and families. One way to do this is by showing the social return on investment (i.e., the monetary impact of the CSC investments in terms of the benefits received or costs avoided by investing in prevention and early intervention services). The challenge for the CSC is to develop a methodology for determining how to measure the monetary impact of the programs and services it supports. This is particularly difficult when the benefits are not immediately realized, as is often the case for prevention services.
Ensuring Accountability Among Contracted Providers

Voters have a direct role in funding and sustaining the CSC, so accountability for using tax dollars wisely and avoiding fraud or abuse is critical. The CSC needs to be able to demonstrate that its contracting process is transparent and competitive and that provider organizations use the funds they receive in strict compliance with the terms of their contracts. Equally important is the ability to demonstrate that provider organizations are meeting key goals and benchmarks of success, as defined by the CSC.

Developing and implementing an effective accountability system, however, is difficult, even for an organization with resources comparable to those of the CSC. Key challenges include developing a common set of performance benchmarks that can be used across different programs, collecting common data measures and accurately reporting on those measures. Meeting these challenges is especially problematic when contracted programs use different data systems and processes for collecting and reporting performance data.

Funding decisions are based on successful performance, so providers must clearly understand the requirements and the standards against which their performance is judged. Accordingly, the CSC faces the challenge of implementing a performance measurement and accountability system that is transparent and understandable to leaders in contracted organizations and that they believe provides a fair basis for making funding decisions. If contracted providers do not understand the performance measures being used to evaluate their work or do not feel the measures are valid, the effectiveness of the performance measurement and accountability system will be quickly undermined.

Balancing Accountability and System Capacity-Building

Most contracted providers are small, local nonprofit organizations. They vary dramatically in size and internal management capacity. Some of the smallest organizations face significant challenges in maintaining robust internal financial management and human resources systems, collecting data and reporting on performance. In many instances, CSC’s community partners rely on the organization to provide staff training and technical assistance as well as infrastructure such as data systems. Consequently, the challenge for the CSC is to balance its need for accountability and performance measurement with the reality that its partners may not have the necessary management capacity and expertise to do the job well.

Continuing to Leverage Other Funding

Although *ad valorem* tax revenue (taxes plus reserves) currently provides more than 90 percent of CSC funding, the organization accesses other funding sources to strengthen its system. This includes pursuing other federal and private grant opportunities and leveraging local tax revenue to match and draw down other federal, state and local funding. The CSC is challenged to communicate to the public the impact those leveraged dollars have on expanding or enhancing services to children and families, because this additional funding does not appear in the CSC budget.
Financing and Sustainability Strategies

Regardless of the quality and value of programs and services, intensive, multi-sector, place-based initiatives can unravel if leaders and stakeholders fail to plan thoughtfully for sustainability. A strong and sustainable initiative requires:

- A clear vision and a results orientation;
- A strategic and entrepreneurial financing orientation;
- A broad base of community support;
- An ability to adapt to changing community contexts and conditions; and
- Strong internal systems.

In addition to adequate funding to support multi-sector services, leaders in Palm Beach County realize the importance of nonfinancial resources in determining the long-term sustainability and impact of the Children’s Services Council (CSC). To address its financing challenges, the CSC has implemented strategies that touch on each element of sustainability.

Vision and Results Orientation

Initiatives that achieve long-term sustainability and impact do so by focusing intently on the vision and results they hope to achieve for children and families and by communicating this message to key stakeholders in the community (see Vision and Results Orientation: Keys to Success on page 76). Leaders of successful initiatives use data to make adjustments to the programs and services they provide and to determine how and where to allocate resources, thus reinforcing accountability.

The Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County has established a clear mission and set goals to help guide its investments in children and families. The original council members were forward-thinking in establishing a process for evaluating the results achieved through CSC investments. Although some strategies have shifted over time, the CSC’s goal remains to ensure children in the county are born healthy, remain free from abuse and neglect and enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Key strategies the CSC has pursued to achieve its organizational goals, include:

- Creating a clear vision of success for serving children and families;
- Developing a logic model and theory of change that maps the strategies to identified outcomes and indicators;
- Measuring performance against common outcomes and indicators; and
- Using data to measure the results of the work and to drive decisionmaking.
Creating a Clear Vision of Success. Building a sustainable initiative involves persuading funders, community members, policymakers, partner organizations and other stakeholders to invest in a compelling vision. Consequently, communicating a clear vision that will garner a broad base of community and stakeholder support is critical to organizations such as the CSC.

Members appointed to the board decided the organization should focus on prevention and early intervention, which at the time the legislation was passed creating the CSC represented a significant service gap in Palm Beach County’s early childhood system. The CSC board adopted principles to guide its actions and investments. Although CSC strategies have shifted over time in response to emerging scientific research and changing community conditions, these guiding principles remain the foundation for CSC decisionmaking.

When the CSC began operating, little was required of grantees in the way of reporting on outcomes. This was due, in part, to the limitations of existing data systems. Additionally, no uniformity existed across programs in determining goals and desired outcomes, the types of data they collected and the indicators used for measuring progress. Without a common set of outcomes and indicators aligned with the CSC’s own strategic priorities, the organization could not measure the impact of its investments on desired results for children, families and the community. These early challenges led to the development of a logic model and theory of change that serves as the road map to guide the organization’s strategic actions and investments.

Developing a Logic Model and Theory of Change. To understand the results its investments were achieving across all funded programs, the CSC developed a comprehensive logic model and theory of change in 2005. This process helped clarify what success looks like and how funded programs and services contribute to meeting community-level child and family outcomes. Specifically, the CSC developed and published Pathway to Early Childhood Development to help communicate how all strategies impact child-level outcomes and how success will be measured (see Table 1 on page 72). The document incorporates:

- **Four key community-level outcomes** (sentinel outcomes) the organization hopes to impact;
- **Twenty indicators** (measurable conditions) it will use to measure progress against these outcomes; and
- **Broad strategies and interventions** it will implement to achieve its goals.
The CSC has carefully identified benchmarks and strategies through the Pathway document. This document provides the framework for a sophisticated performance measurement and management system. During 2012, the CSC focused its efforts on becoming more data-savvy by examining how the organization can access data in new ways to open conversations and examine its work from an expanded vantage point.\(^{17}\)

### Using Data to Measure Performance

The council and staff believe that by measuring and analyzing performance, they can make informed investments in programs and services that achieve results. To measure progress in achieving the CSC’s four sentinel outcomes, it created the Pathway Tracking Portfolio in 2010. Built from the Pathway to Early Childhood Development document, the Pathway Tracking Portfolio enables staff to monitor the performance of individual providers and aggregate data across all programs that contribute to each specific outcome. The tool encourages shared responsibility for achieving results not only across contracted programs, but also within CSC internal divisions.

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In developing the Pathway Tracking Portfolio, staff from several CSC departments, including information management, program planning and research, worked collaboratively to review 42 programs that delivered contracted services during the prior year. The committee began by examining existing measures tracked by contracted agencies to determine how well those measures aligned to and contributed to CSC’s sentinel outcomes. The committee also reviewed the measures to ensure they were appropriate indicators for desired program outcomes. Finally, staff considered the relative contribution of each program to the aggregate impact of the CSC’s investments in Palm Beach County. The data collected through the Pathway Tracking Portfolio informs internal decisionmaking on strategic investments in programs and services and provides background for the external communication of results and movement toward the CSC’s goals.

Table 2 provides an example of one indicator from the Pathway Portfolio. In most cases, more than one program impacts a sentinel outcome. Additionally, many programs contribute to multiple outcomes and/or multiple measurable conditions.

### TABLE 2: SAMPLE INDICATOR FROM PATHWAY PORTFOLIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENTINEL OUTCOME (SO): HEALTHY BIRTHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measurable Condition (MC): Increase the percentage of mothers receiving early and regular prenatal care</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator: Rate of infant mortality and percent of low birth weight births</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Program Goals</th>
<th>Population Targeted</th>
<th>SO/MCs Addressed by Program</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Outcome Indicator</th>
<th>Outcome Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centering Pregnancy® Program</td>
<td>Improved interconceptional and prenatal health for women; healthy birth and developmental outcomes (reduce prematurity); and reduced disparities in access to maternal and child health between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic white population</td>
<td>Pregnant Latinas in the Lantana/ Lake Worth Area</td>
<td>SO-A, MC1, MC3</td>
<td>Women in program consistently receive prenatal care</td>
<td>Number of group sessions scheduled and attended</td>
<td>108/125 (86%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conducting its Pathway work, the CSC looked across all the programs and services it funds. What it found was that all programs were using different data tools and collecting different data that made it hard to roll up the data and make any conclusions about impact. For example, about 19 different agencies work in home visiting. The CSC is trying to roll up this data into performance measures that describe the aggregate impact and that enable comparison across programs.
Using Data to Drive Decision-making. Many foundations, state and local governments and private funders collect data on organizational performance. Fewer of them use this information to hold organizations accountable for achieving target results, however. The CSC has implemented an ambitious performance measurement and accountability system, Investing for Results (IFR). IFR represents a linked process of review of:

- The capacity of contracted agencies to positively affect CSC sentinel outcomes;
- The balance of CSC investments across focus and impact areas;
- The level of CSC investment in contracted agencies; and
- The efficiency of CSC program monitoring, evaluation and contracting processes.

Investing for Results represents a systematic review of the CSC’s external grant-making activities and investments as well as its strategic focus on investing in programs and services that will achieve desired outcomes for children (see Figure 4 below).

**FIGURE 4: CHILDREN’S SERVICES COUNCIL’S INVESTING FOR RESULTS REVIEW PROCESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investing for Results (IFR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Review and Allocation Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Agency/ Program Assessment (CAPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero-Based Budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Performance/ Contracting Processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Internal Accountability**

**External Accountability**

*Source: Children’s Services Council Palm Beach County, Strategic Plan Presentation*
The IFR components cut across the key elements of sustainability introduced earlier in the case study. These components provide the evidence and support for decisions and actions that enhance sustainability.

- **Measuring the Impact of Investments in Contracted Providers.** In 2011, the CSC began to implement its Comprehensive Agency and Program Assessment (CAPA) process, which put in place a standardized, transparent method of evaluating and holding accountable its contracted providers. CSC staff reviewed all contracted providers – some of which were operating more than one program – to determine whether the provider should continue to receive funding in the next fiscal year based on its performance. In making this determination, CAPA was used for an agency financial and operational assessment, including audit findings, financial ratios and measures of agency operations; and a program assessment, including program operations, performance data and fidelity to models and deliverables.

For each provider organization, CAPA looks at several components. Agency performance on each measure is calculated as part of an overall score. Agencies that perform below specified benchmarks can have their contracts reduced or terminated.

As a result of the process, programs with the lowest scores were defunded in 2012. For other programs, funding was continued contingent on a revision of data collection and reporting processes to better align to CSC-developed sentinel outcomes and indicators.

The CSC staff has made adjustments to the assessment process to address challenges it experienced in implementing CAPA (see Challenges in Implementing an Accountability System). Primary among these challenges was the specification of performance measures and targets in performance-based contracts. Because many contracts already existed at the time CAPA started, the initial round of evaluations resulted in some programs having to adjust performance measures mid-cycle. After this initial round, performance measures and targets have been developed prior to the issuance of a request for proposals for program providers and contract development to get all contracted agencies onto a similar cycle.

As part of the CAPA process, the CSC has begun to move all the programs it funds to performance-based contracts. The CSC developed a document, *Establishing Program Performance Measures and Targets*, to help guide the process. This guide describes how performance measures and targets should be developed for program providers. It identifies relevant data for tracking performance and recommends a review process. CSC staff members meet with providers to help them understand the process and what is expected of them and to discuss any issues they have concerning the performance measures by which they will be evaluated. Target measures are determined by the CSC and cannot be negotiated with the providers.

**Challenges in Implementing an Accountability System**

Implementing any accountability process for the first time can pose complications and, not surprisingly, the Comprehensive Agency and Program Assessment (CAPA) process experienced some challenges. One notable challenge involved getting agreement from contracted agencies on the indicators by which they would be measured and the performance targets or benchmarks they would be required to meet. Despite some pushback, the CSC is confident the CAPA process will prove to be valuable by encouraging providers to focus on a common set of outcomes and results. Program and provider data will enable the CSC to more easily communicate the results of its investments to key stakeholders, including funders and the broader public.
Measuring the Impact of CSC’s Internal Systems and Administration. In addition to the programs it funds, the CSC also reviews the impact its internal operations have on the children and families it serves. The Strategy Review and Allocation Analysis (SRAA) aims to ensure dollars are spent on the most effective and efficient strategies, programs and systems that have been found to help achieve the desired child outcomes. The SRAA process starts by reviewing the literature to identify what are the most effective services and strategies that have been found to positively impact the children the CSC serves. The CSC also considers what system aspects are most critical to success. For example, is staff training needed to ensure fidelity to a particular model and, if so, are sufficient resources being provided?

As part of the process, the CSC also reviews its portfolio of funded programs to identify service gaps and consider the extent to which funded programs are aligned with the goals and outcomes that have been identified through CSC strategic planning. The organization uses the information from this process to determine whether new programs or services are needed; identify whether duplication of services exists; and determine whether existing programs are not aligned with its goals and, therefore, should be reduced or eliminated.

As the CSC continues to grow and mature, it is guided by a clear vision and a strong results orientation. These features help ensure the organization’s mission drives strategic investments rather than its investments driving the organization’s mission.

VISION AND RESULTS: KEYS TO SUCCESS

The CSC has successfully maintained a clear vision for its work since the agency’s beginnings in 1986. It has implemented innovative systems to create an accountability framework that links results to the agency’s vision.

- **Share vision and results framework with partners and the community.**
  The CSC developed the *Pathways for Early Childhood Development* document to clearly demonstrate how its own actions, as well as the actions of contracted agencies, support the achievement of community sentinel outcomes. The *Pathways* document is available for download on the CSC’s website.

- **Implement accountability systems to measure internal and external progress towards results.**
  When CSC leaders developed the new accountability system, Investing for Results, they developed a method for measuring not only the progress of contracted agencies, but also the extent to which CSC policies and strategies supported or hindered the work of the contracted agencies. Understanding the funder’s role in achieving – or hampering the achievement of – results is critical.

- **When implementing accountability systems, be transparent and open to change.**
  The CSC recently implemented CAPA, a new system for holding its contracted agencies accountable for achieving specific outcome results. During implementation and working closely with its partners, CSC found weaknesses and challenges in the system. Its transparent and open approach to resolving challenges with this new system has been important to garnering buy-in from agency partners.
Strategic Financing Orientation

Leaders of organizations with a strategic financing orientation have a clear understanding of available resources, understand where gaps in funding exist and use various funding sources and strategies to support their work (see Strategic Financing Orientation: Keys to Success on page 79). The Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County is fortunate to have a significant dedicated funding source. By strategically allocating this flexible funding source, the CSC has built a high-quality system of care for young children and families that is tailored to Palm Beach County’s needs.

The CSC has aggressively pursued other funding opportunities, including accessing federal, state and private grants, to supplement its property tax revenue. The organization also expanded the impact of its local revenues by leveraging other funding sources, such as Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care and Development Fund dollars, to support the programs and services it provides.

Some of the strategic financing strategies the CSC has implemented to achieve its goals include:

- Accessing multiple funding streams, including federal, state and private grants;
- Leveraging additional funding by providing the nonfederal share match and creating co-funded initiatives; and
- Providing targeted funding to fill service gaps, including efforts to implement a quality rating and improvement system and additional resources to support a high-quality teaching workforce in early education.

Accessing Multiple Funding Streams. To supplement its special tax revenue, the CSC also accesses federal, state, local and private funding.

For fiscal 2011–2012, the CSC accessed the following funding sources to support its work:18

- **Property Tax Revenue:** $91,798,715
- **State and Federal Grants:**
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration: $875,000
  - U.S. Department of Education: $500,000
  - Florida Department of Health: $3,598,234
- **Private Grants:**
  - United Way of Palm Beach County: $26,250
  - Libra Foundation: $25,000

The CSC tries to take maximum advantage of available federal and state dollars to support strategies and activities that align to its strategic plan. By accessing discretionary state and federal funds through grants and contracts, the CSC can preserve its funds and target them to services that cannot be funded through other means.

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18. Palm Beach CSC, Internal budget documents.
Leveraging Funding. One key strategy to maximize investments is to leverage other funding available to support an initiative. The CSC does this primarily by providing the nonfederal match that many programs require and by co-funding projects with other funders.

In 2011, the CSC’s investments leveraged $36 million in additional funding for early childhood services in Palm Beach County (see Figure 5). In essence, through its investment of $92 million, the CSC was able to increase the amount of funding supporting local early childhood programs in the county by 40 percent. Although this leveraged funding is not captured in the CSC budget, it represents a critical infusion of revenues to the county’s early childhood system. Traditionally, Florida is considered a donor state when it comes to federal funds; it pays proportionally more in taxes than it receives in funding. The CSC uses its dedicated revenue as matching funds to help ensure Palm Beach County gets its fair share of federal funding.

![Figure 5: Leveraging of Investments by the Children’s Services Council](image)

Source: Interview with CSC Finance staff.

The CSC provides the nonfederal match for two key programs in Palm Beach County: Head Start, Early Head Start and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). 19

- **Head Start and Early Head Start.** The CSC provides required nonfederal matching funds for several Head Start programs in the county. By providing some of the required 20 percent nonfederal share match, these programs are able to draw down the other 80 percent of their funding through the federal Head Start and Early Head Start programs. For example, in 2010–2011, the CSC’s investment of $713,556 in local funding helped leverage $5,320,477 in additional Head Start funding.

- **Child Care and Development Fund.** The CSC is the largest local funder of child care services for low-income children in the county. In 2010–2011, the CSC’s investment of $1.6 million enabled the county to draw down approximately $14.1 million in CCDF funding.

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19. Interview with CSC Finance staff.
The CSC also has spearheaded many public-private partnerships that help provide needed services and supports for low-income children and families in the county. The organization typically is a co-funder of these initiatives and it has succeeded in bringing in other partners and additional funding to support the work. One example is the Summer Camp Scholarships program. The CSC and the county commissioners joined with local philanthropic and corporate funders to create a pool of more than $1 million to pay for vouchers for low-income children to participate in a local summer camp.

**Filling Service Gaps.** Whenever possible, the CSC funds programs and initiatives to fill critical gaps in services for Palm Beach County children and families, rather than duplicating or competing with existing programs and services. The Continue to Care Scholarship program fills one such gap. CCDF block grant funding supports child care subsidies to low-income working families. This important benefit provides safe, quality early care and education programs to working parents who would otherwise not be able to afford child care services. Eligibility for CCDF-funded child care is reassessed regularly, however and parents can lose their benefits if they exceed income limits or lose their jobs. Accordingly, the Continue to Care Scholarship program supports families and children in these situations, ensuring continued access to quality child care.

The CSC also supports a quality initiative for publicly funded child care programs. In the absence of a statewide effort to boost program quality or statewide funding for this effort, the CSC and community partners developed a model quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). The QRIS provides a framework for measuring quality and a system of linked professional development for providers.

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**STRATEGIC FINANCING ORIENTATION: KEYS TO SUCCESS**

The Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County has been effective in maximizing and growing the resources available to support its strategic initiatives. Following are keys to success:

**Leave no money on the table.** The CSC pursues appropriate state, federal and philanthropic funding opportunities. The organization is seen as a model for collaboration and innovation in early childhood systems-building, so it often has a leg up in competitive grant opportunities. In fiscal 2011–2012, CSC accessed $5.2 million in federal, state and private grants.

**Use funds to leverage additional investments.** Many federal and state funding streams serving children and families require a nonfederal match. The CSC plays an important role in the community by providing this match for Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care and Development Fund programs. Match funding from the CSC leverages an additional $36 million in federal funds, which dramatically increases the number of children and families served.
**Broad Base of Community Support**

Having adequate financial resources is necessary for the long-term sustainability of an initiative, but having broad community support for the work is equally crucial (see Broad Base of Community Support: Keys to Success on the next page). In the case of the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County, voters determine its future. Accordingly, CSC staff members work continuously to cultivate support from disparate community groups, including the administrators of county systems and services, property owners and clients and beneficiaries of CSC-funded services. All three groups play critical roles in supporting the organization’s sustainability. CSC cultivates community support by communicating results to taxpayers, serving as a neutral convener and reaching out to the community to ensure families and children who can benefit from CSC programs and services do so.

**Communicating Results to Taxpayers.** A priority of CSC’s communications strategy is to communicate the social return on investment from CSC funding. This entails identifying whether the benefits realized from CSC-funded services and programs – to children, families or the community – exceed the costs and, if so, by how much. As part of its Investing for Results strategy, the CSC is looking at ways to calculate the monetary value of certain programs where the value of the benefits received, or the costs avoided, can be calculated to measure the social return on investment. This is an ongoing process, but it is critical to the CSC’s strategy to communicate its message of result-based accountability to key constituencies, including community business leaders.

To support this effort, the communications team at the CSC is focused on creating a recognizable and respected brand that will communicate clear and persuasive messages to key audiences (e.g., the public, service providers, the media and government agencies) on the impact of the organization. To create a strong and consistent brand identity, all communications materials must be aligned. Thus far, CSC has redesigned its website as well as the style of its print materials to ensure all marketing and communications reflect a consistent and easily identifiable look.

Additionally, the CSC has produced videos to clearly articulate the benefits of its work to multiple stakeholders.20 One of the videos, “The Stronger Story,” uses animation to communicate the CSC’s mission, its activities in the community and the benefits of its services to taxpayers in a clear, attention-getting message that is brief and direct.

**Serving as a Neutral Convener.** As part of its role in providing backbone support to direct service providers in the community, the Palm Beach County CSC plays the important role of neutral convener (see Children’s Services Council’s Role as a Neutral Convener on the next page). A key condition for achieving collective impact is having a common agenda for change. An organization or a collaborative body needs to convene stakeholders and create a safe place for leaders to have the conversations that lead to the establishment of a common vision and program priorities. The CSC provides that safe space.

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CHILDREN SERVICES COUNCIL’S ROLE AS A NEUTRAL CONVENER

The CSC reported its work in convening community partners as one of its top 10 achievements in 2012. During the 2011–2012 funding year, the CSC collaborated with agencies and community-based organizations to:

- Support the countywide safety committee;
- Provide child care van alarm reimbursements;
- Help develop the Palm Beach County Counts community data site;
- Develop a common eligibility process with community funders; and
- Support an awareness campaign on teen pregnancy prevention.

Note: Palm Beach CSC, Top 10 Achievements

The CSC brings together stakeholders, including public agencies, community-based providers, schools and hospitals, to introduce new ideas on how best to meet the needs of young children and families in the county. The CSC has the powerful advantage of being able to support the implementation of new ideas and strategies with funding, professional development and evaluation services, so it can encourage partners to listen, learn and work together. Council members see the council as a creative forum to discuss, design and implement innovative strategies for improving community outcomes – a role they cannot always embrace as leaders of public mission agencies.

BROAD BASE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT: KEYS TO SUCCESS

The CSC constantly works to cultivate and shore up community support for its work. Following are some strategies to replicate:

Be present in the community. CSC leaders and staff are seen as important community resources and leaders. The organization convenes or works collaboratively on numerous efforts aimed at improving community conditions for children and youth.

Create a CSC brand. During the past year, the CSC has worked to standardize its print, video and spoken messaging. The agency has a communications style guide to ensure written and e-mail communications, PowerPoint presentations and printed materials have a unified look, presentation and style.

Demonstrate the impact of programs. The CSC has sought to communicate its message using a framework of result-based accountability to key constituencies, including community business leaders.
Ability to Adapt to Changing Conditions and Contexts

The most successful community initiatives have leaders who are adept at anticipating, influencing and effectively responding to new opportunities or threats in their environment, for example, by taking advantage of new funding opportunities or adjusting to a political transition (see Ability to Adapt to Changing Conditions and Contexts: Keys to Success on page 84). Adapting to changing conditions involves keeping abreast of current research in the field as well as data on the economic, demographic and social conditions in the community. It also means contributing to and helping shape policy at the local, state and national levels.21

The CSC’s guiding principles explicitly address the need to adapt to changing community conditions. The organization is required to implement data-driven and evidence-based solutions, ensure a high return on investment and embrace a culture of continuous learning and improvement. To realize its guiding principles, the CSC must change its strategies as community needs change, as research and best practices evolve and as staff and stakeholders learn what works and what does not work.

The attention the CSC pays to changing community context and organizational capacity is demonstrated by its move in 1990 from operating as a traditional foundation to focusing on monitoring and ensuring accountability among its contracted service providers. Council members were not satisfied with the results from the initial approach and asked the staff to develop a new model for community investment. Informed by emerging research on brain development and Lisbeth Schorr’s *Within Our Reach*,22 the staff created a vision for community grant-making that is focused and systemic.

The CSC presented to its board a plan for investing that is:23

- Child outcome-focused, not service-focused;
- Strategic; and
- Informed by communitywide research and planning as a way to prioritize activities and strategies.

Accordingly, in 1990, the board embraced this new approach by focusing its resources on programs whose work was most closely aligned with its new investment plan. One result of this process was that the CSC significantly reduced the number of programs it supported by almost half, while providing larger grants to programs it did support. The organization also moved to five-year contracts with community-based organizations, based on the belief that contracted agencies need time and funding to develop the level of infrastructure required to meet new contract expectations. Additionally, the CSC aligned its work and structure to effectively manage the oversight, monitoring, technical assistance and professional development necessary for providers in the community to be able to meet the target outcomes.

Staying Abreast of Policy Changes. The CSC stays attuned to possible local, state and federal policy and funding changes that can positively or negatively affect its work, the programs it funds and/or the children and families it serves. Each year, the council and CSC staff members identify legislative priorities of interest or concern to the organization (see Children’s Services Council’s State and Federal Legislative Priorities for the 2012–2013 Legislative Session below).

**CHILDREN’S SERVICES COUNCIL’S STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 2012–2013 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

- **Advocate for funding of maternal and child health, early childhood and school-age programs** – by maintaining programs and services for pregnant women, mothers and infants to ensure children are born healthy and to identify and address children’s delays and disabilities as early as possible; and promoting and protecting quality early care and education services so children are ready to learn when they enter school.

- **Support the safety and well-being of young children and school-age youth** – by advocating for child safety campaigns, promoting quality afterschool programming and supporting effective prevention programs that help parents raise their children in a positive way.

- **Ensure accountability** – by funding programs and services that are backed by sound evidence and research. [It is imperative that programs and services are selected based on their ability to achieve measurable outcomes.]

- **Support a statewide system of evidence- and research-based programs to improve birth outcomes, prevent child abuse and neglect and improve school readiness** – by partnering with a multitude of local, state and national organizations to design a web of supports and services that benefit all Palm Beach County children.

*Source: Children’s Services Council Palm Beach County, “Legislative Priorities,” www.cscpbc.org/legislative-priorities.*

Using Social Science Research to Guide Program Development. As reflected in its guiding principles, the CSC has a deep commitment to implementing evidence-based programs and interventions to meet pervasive community needs. The growing body of brain development research and knowledge on how to measure the quality and effectiveness of programs and interventions has led the CSC board and staff to revisit its strategic approach on a continuing basis. The Investing for Results process provides the current framework for regular review of the impact of CSC strategic investments in the community.
Finding and Managing Talent. An innovative agency demands an equally innovative, talented and energetic workforce. Compounding the challenge of finding talent with appropriate experience, aptitude and attitude is the CSC’s primary reliance on a public funding stream that must be renewed periodically as its revenue source. As a result of the economic downturn that began in 2008, the organization implemented a voluntary early retirement program and a voluntary reduction in force agreement. Because of changes in state law, the CSC also revised its postemployment benefit. Although no leader relishes workforce reductions, the council and executive director endeavored to reduce the workforce fairly. For any future hiring, CSC is using a recruiting and hiring process informed by a predictive index tool to select candidates most likely to thrive in the organization’s work environment.

ABILITY TO ADAPT TO CHANGING CONDITIONS AND CONTEXTS: KEYS TO SUCCESS

The Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County embraces change but always stays true to its vision and mission. The organization’s guiding principles have served as a beacon and buffer through changing conditions and community contexts. Following are keys to its success:

Have the right people in the right roles. Implementing innovative approaches to community-building and systems change is not easy. The CSC requires talent with very specific expertise, experience, skills and attitudes to do its work. The organization’s human resources system has developed over time to ensure it is recruiting excellent talent.

Embrace change, even when it is hard and unpopular. The CSC implemented a new accountability framework in 2012. Implementation of the framework demanded much of contracted agencies, council members and CSC staff. As is often the case, the changes implemented were met with some reluctance. The CSC is openly addressing challenges and concerns regarding the new system.

Strong Internal Systems

Sustainable organizations must have robust internal systems to effectively and efficiently manage all aspects of their operations (see Strong Internal Systems: Keys to Success on page 86). Having strong systems and processes for internal and external communications, personnel and human resources, procurement and contracting, accounting and auditing, information systems and technology and governance and management are critical for initiatives hoping to support and achieve collective impact. This is particularly true in an organization such as the CSC, which mainly relies on a dedicated local tax to support the programs and services it provides to children and families.
Leaders at the CSC must actively demonstrate that they are good stewards of public resources by showing they are maximizing local tax dollars and are closely monitoring the performance of contracted agencies to ensure they are purchasing high quality services. Both require the CSC to operate efficient and transparent internal systems. For example, maximizing funding requires financial leaders to work closely with programmatic staff to identify new grant opportunities as well as opportunities to leverage local dollars and draw down available federal funding. Using data systems and evaluation to monitor contractor performance also requires investments in data and evaluation systems as well as adequately trained staff to help design and implement the systems and tools required.

Strong internal systems are critical to the CSC’s success and sustainability. The organization is thoughtfully and carefully organized to support its work in the community. In 2012, the council and senior staff developed and began to implement the chief executive officer’s plan to align key organizational goals, CSC’s staff organization and individual department business plans to achieve the key child outcomes established by the council with significant community input.

**Internal Systems Reflect Organizational Goals.** The CSC structure reflects the organization’s priorities. It also reflects its role as a purchaser of services, rather than a provider of direct services. The CSC provides the key supports and coordinates participating organizations and agencies to help achieve the common agenda and shared vision for change that makes collective impact work. Divisions within the CSC work collaboratively to identify what services are needed, determine who in the community can best provide them and issue contracts to community agencies and organizations.

Successful implementation of the Investing for Results framework, specifically the CAPA process, requires significant, coordinated support from all divisions within the CSC. This relationship is demonstrated by a fairly flat organizational chart as well as by supportive organizational behavior (e.g., monthly meetings of division heads to assess progress toward the chief executive officer’s strategic priorities).

**Infrastructure Needs of Contracted Agencies Require Support.** The performance of contracted and partner agencies directly affects the CSC’s ability to meet community goals. However, a seminal study, *Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations,* indicates that “very few individuals excel from the outset at both leadership and management; in fact, most organizations have a glaring capacity gap in high-level management skills.” Current grant-making practices that fund only program activities, rather than a mix of organizational capacity and direct services, may inadvertently contribute to this gap.

The CSC has taken steps to address the management and leadership gap among its partners by providing start-up and sustained funding to Nonprofits First in Palm Beach County (see Nonprofits First: Providing Critical Back- and Front-office Supports to Service Providers on page 86). Nonprofits First provides professional development and certification to leaders of small to midsize nonprofits as well as critical, but often costly, back-office and consulting functions. The mission of Nonprofits First is simple: To strengthen the administrative capacity of nonprofit agencies by promoting best practices in nonprofit management.

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25. Ibid.
NONPROFITS FIRST: PROVIDING CRITICAL BACK- AND FRONT-OFFICE SUPPORTS TO SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County has high expectations for its partner and funded agencies and organizations, expectations that some agency leaders need help in meeting. Nonprofits First provides trainings and technical assistance through its GoLearn, GoLead and Certification programs. The CSC encourages its grantees to take advantage of the trainings by providing training vouchers redeemable for Nonprofits First trainings.

In addition to a comprehensive slate of trainings to support nonprofit administration and management, Nonprofits First provides back-office services through its GoTech, GoFigure, GoTalent and GoBuild programs. These back-office support services enable community-based organizations to contract for specialized, cost-effective services, thus curtailing overhead costs and enabling a greater percentage of its funding to be spent on direct services. The CSC benefits from this assistance by receiving standardized data and reports – charts of accounts, invoices and other administrative data – from fewer external accounting vendors.

Working in concert, the CSC and Nonprofits First have increased the management and administrative capacity of community-based organizations across Palm Beach County. The two organizations have, in fact, created a one-stop shop by collocating in the same building. Both offices have training and meeting space, so grantees and contracted agencies become comfortable coming to the building to attend trainings and CSC meetings and to access other resources.

Nonprofits First provides regular sessions of its GoLearn, GoLead and Certification programs to help ensure all CSC nonprofit partners have the capacity and knowledge to comply with all basic federal, state and local rules. As a result of lessons learned through the CAPA process, CSC and Nonprofits First are working cooperatively to develop trainings to address some common deficiencies and challenges. Trainings in development include how to use data to support continuous improvement efforts, how to engage with the community and clients and how to implement program models with fidelity.

Finding qualified individuals to provide key back-office services, such as payroll processing, accounting, human resources support and information technology support, at a reasonable price, is a challenge for small community-based nonprofits. By investing in Nonprofits First, CSC ensures its contracted agencies have access to high-quality, reasonably-priced administrative services, thus minimizing overhead and administrative costs while maximizing its investment in services.

STRONG INTERNAL SYSTEMS: KEY TO SUCCESS

An organization that relies heavily on contracted partners to help achieve its desired outcomes must pay close attention to its own internal systems as well as the internal systems of its partners. Following is a key to success:

Invest in the internal systems of contracted agencies
By investing in Nonprofits First, the CSC has a ready-made partner to help improve the internal systems of its contracted agencies. In many agencies, CSC investments represent most of available revenue. The CSC must ensure these contracted agencies have the financial and back-office systems to meet reporting requirements.
Key Findings and Lessons Learned

In this case study, The Finance Project staff has detailed key components of the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County’s place-based, multi-service initiative for young children and their families. The case study also describes how the Children’s Services Council (CSC) has addressed significant financing and sustainability challenges. What emerges is a valuable set of findings and lessons learned that can help strengthen ongoing efforts in Palm Beach County and inform the work of other Children’s Outcomes Project (COP) network initiatives. The case study also is useful for leaders in other communities across the nation who are striving to create and sustain intensive, multi-sector, place-based early childhood initiatives.

Details on the context, conditions and policies that have impacted the CSC’s success can help answer these questions: What do successful place-based health and development initiatives look like on the ground and in action? What conditions, circumstances and contexts are critical to this work? Deeper analysis of the unique attributes and characteristics that played a distinct role in the development and sustainability of the CSC answer additional questions such as: How have these strategies been implemented? What have been the implementation pitfalls or challenges?

Taken together, these four questions lend a greater understanding of the key findings specific to the CSC initiative. They also reveal insights and lessons learned that other communities can apply to their own work.

Key Findings

Several features of the CSC’s structure, operations and management provide a context for successfully financing and sustaining its programs and services.

Accountability Drives Quality and Quality Drives Outcomes. The CSC has implemented a rigorous process for evaluating its performance-based service contracts through a process called Comprehensive Agency and Program Assessment (CAPA), now called the Comprehensive Program Performance Assessment (CPPA). Agencies and programs are evaluated based on their performance in achieving outcomes and continued funding depends on this performance. Additionally, the CSC has developed an internal process to review and make decisions on its funding priorities called Strategy Review and Allocation Analysis (SRAA). Through these efforts, the CSC aims to ensure it maximizes its investments in programs and services that have the greatest impact on children and families in the county. Using data gathered through the CPPA and SRAA processes, CSC leaders can make a strong argument to taxpayers that the organization is accountable for the public funds it receives and that CSC funds are allocated to ensure maximum positive results for children and families.
High Levels of Accountability Require Investments in Capacity and Infrastructure Building. The CSC must balance the need for accountability and performance measurement with the reality that the contracted organizations it relies on to achieve community-level goals have varying levels of capacity and expertise. Acknowledging this reality, the CSC makes significant investments in building the capacity of contracted providers and improving the systemwide infrastructure needed to develop and maintain a prevention and early intervention system for children and families that is efficient and well coordinated. The CSC is a major investor in Nonprofits First, a Palm Beach County organization that provides critical back-office and other management and strategy support and technical assistance to small and midsize nonprofits. Additionally, the CSC provides high-quality training and technical assistance to practitioners and providers in Palm Beach County and surrounding counties. Finally, the CSC builds a countywide infrastructure through its Investing for Results framework. This framework provides a backdrop for community-based service providers to focus efforts and approaches on improved child and family outcomes in Palm Beach County.

Community Support Is Crucial to Long-term Sustainability. Although the CSC is supported by a dedicated funding source – through its status as a special tax taxing district – the organization must continue to build strong ties with and educate, key community leaders to ensure they value its work and understand its impact on children and families. State legislation enacted in 2010 requires the CSC to seek reauthorization through voter referendum by 2016. To continue to function effectively, the CSC needs a strong community presence and leaders who are willing to advocate on its behalf. Additionally, the CSC is developing strategies to calculate the social return on investment for the programs and services it manages in an effort to communicate to key stakeholders, including important members of the business community, the monetary value of the benefits received and costs avoided.

Efforts to Leverage Funding Enables the CSC to Maximize Public Revenues. The CSC has been strategic in investing its resources in programs where local revenues can be used to leverage additional federal and state dollars. The organization does this by providing the nonfederal match that many programs require and by co-funding programs offered by local provider organizations with other funders. In 2011, the CSC was able to leverage an additional $36 million through its investment of $90 million, thereby increasing total funding to support its efforts in early childhood by nearly 40 percent.

Lessons Learned

This case study reveals several useful lessons learned that can be applied to the work of other multi-sector, place-based initiatives.

Meeting Evolving Community Needs Requires Flexibility and Innovation. In the early 1990s, the CSC shifted from funding services program by program to making strategic investments to create a multi-sector system of services for children and families and supports for prevention and early intervention. Council members set a clear vision and focus for the organization. The vision is implemented through strategically designed and carefully monitored contracts. The investment strategy is flexible and it changes annually as community conditions and needs evolve.
CSC Serves as a Backbone Organization in Palm Beach County. The CSC has taken on other roles to support and reinforce the development of an early childhood system in Palm Beach County. These roles include providing technical assistance to community-based organizations to build system capacity; convening community partners to agree to implement strategies that impact a common goal; and helping integrate the work of multiple community-based organizations and county agencies by developing and measuring common data metrics. The organization’s leadership has enabled the county to move toward collective impact.

Clearly Communicating the Mission, Impact and Value of the CSC Is Critical for Long-term Sustainability. The CSC impacts more than 100,000 children in Palm Beach County, but relatively few county residents are familiar with the organization and its work. The CSC uses strategic messaging to get the word out about its role and impact in the community. It is easy for the public and partner community-based agencies to take an organization such as the CSC for granted. Therefore, a key goal of the strategic communications effort is to explain, in a clear and compelling way, the role the CSC plays in improving community conditions.

As part of its communications strategy, the CSC is eager to demonstrate that its investments in children and families not only provide benefits to those receiving services, but also are cost-effective and provide a positive long-term monetary benefit for the community. The CSC has developed a framework to calculate a social return on investment of its key programs and services and continues to refine its approach. Many challenges exist in identifying and valuing the social benefits received and costs avoided, but this approach will help provide critical information to the CSC in demonstrating the value of investing local funds in prevention and early intervention services for young children.

Managing a Large Dedicated Revenue Stream Demands Significant Infrastructure. The CSC manages a large funding stream totaling more than $90 million in 2012–2013, which requires a dedicated and talented staff who can manage complex operational processes and systems. The CSC has a highly evolved organizational structure that provides natural points of collaboration and intersection without being redundant and bureaucratic.

The CSC must employ staff who have diverse skills and can perform different functions. The organization’s staff members must develop the systems of care necessary to achieve the desired child outcomes; write performance-based contracts for agencies that provide services within these systems of care; monitor these contracts; and provide leadership and professional development in children’s and family services. Staff must also demonstrate a commitment to working collaboratively with colleagues inside and outside the CSC to do this work well.
Conclusion

The Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County enjoys the unusual benefit of a large and flexible dedicated income stream to support its programs and services for young children ages 0–5. It carefully manages these funds through an innovative and robust performance-based contracting system. Simply put, the CSC has been successful in implementing large-scale systems change in its county as a result of specific management and financing behaviors and characteristics.

The CSC has clearly identified financing and sustainability challenges and has taken strategic steps and actions to address them. The organization has developed transparent processes that keep the public informed about its investment strategy and the community-level results of its investments. Implementing this strategic approach to its work, however, necessitates both internal and external capacity-building. Since its creation in 1986, the CSC has provided countless hours of professional development and technical assistance to community-based organizations; providers of children’s and family services; and local health, education and child care agencies. Additionally, the CSC has made significant investments in building the capacity of its staff and internal systems to be able to efficiently and effectively manage a strategic approach to local investment. Clearly, the strategy and investment have paid off. During fiscal 2011 alone, the CSC served more than 200,000 clients in Palm Beach County in these program areas:28

- Maternal and child health: 12,194;
- Quality care and education: 29,356;
- Family support: 18,033; and
- Special funds/initiatives: 155,899.

Perhaps, more importantly, these services have had a measurable impact on the well-being of children and families in Palm Beach County:29

- During the past five years, both the number of babies born too early and the infant death rate have dropped.
- In 2011, a lower percentage of babies born to women served by the CSC’s Healthy Beginnings System had a low birth weight (7.2 percent), compared with the county average (9.1 percent).
- Nearly all (99.99 percent) children whose families were enrolled in the Healthy Beginnings System for three months or longer remained out of the state child welfare system for at least one year afterward.
- Palm Beach County has the lowest child abuse and maltreatment rate of all urban counties in Florida; in 2012, the county rate of 10.50 per 1,000 children was substantially lower than the state rate of 13.79 per 1,000 children.
- An independent evaluation showed children enrolled in child care settings with the highest quality rating had higher scores on the state school readiness assessment than their peers.

These results speak volumes. CSC investments are positively affecting the economic well-being of Palm Beach County and supporting the healthy growth and development of children in the community.

28. Children’s Services Council Palm Beach County, “Results,” 29. bid.
Appendix: Expenditures Across Programs and Services

Core System Services = $12,795,283
- Entry Agencies
- Bridges
- Outreach
- Screening/Assessment
- Referral/Linkage
- Transportation

Healthy Babies = $5,173,360
- WHIN Nutrition & Dental
- WHIN Nurses
- Healthy Beginnings Nurses
- Community Voice
- Centering
- Wyman’s Teen Outreach Program
- Prenatal Plus – New Program 2013

Early Learning and Development = $32,638,250
- Early Steps
- First Step to Success
- School District Highland
- Reach Our & Read
- Parent Child Home Program
- Building Readers
- Growing Smart
- QQ Coaching
- School District – Certified Teachers
- Professional Development Systems
- Incredible Years – New Program in 2013
- Healthy Steps – New Program 2013

Safe, Nurturing Families and Communities = $22,874,349
- Triple P
- Counseling
- Drowning Prevention
- Safe Kids Coalition
- Healthy Families
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Mental Health Services
- Primary Project
- Foster Children’s Project
- Relative Caregiver Program
- Access to Success
- Juvenile Advocacy Project
- Child Care Slots
- Summer Camp Scholarships
- Prime Time Enhancements & Development
- Mentoring (All) – Partnership with United Way
- Special Needs Initiative
- Partnership with United Way

Infrastructure = $10,116,098
- Data Systems and Evaluations
- Capacity Building (including Triple P, system/provider training, Quality Enhancement Payments, SEEK Scholarships, Continuous Quality Improvement, Certification)
- Fetal Infant Mortality Review
- Revenue Maximization
- Common Eligibility
- Evidence Based Program Development

Strategic Community Partnerships = $1,356,335
- Head Start Match (PEPPI, RCMA, EHS)
- Glades Family Initiative
- FL CSP MOTT AS Network
- Education Commission
- Resource Depot
- Common Application
- PBC Counts
- Palm Beach County Food Bank
- Legal Aid Society Non-Profit Legal Assistance
- Information & Crisis Hotline (211)

Note: Excluded from visual
$2,275,409 in sunsetted programs

Source: CSC Internal Planning document
Acknowledgments

Case Study For Financing And Sustaining Multi-Sector, Place-Based Initiatives: First 5 Alameda County

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Case Study For Financing And Sustaining Multi-Sector, Place-Based Initiatives: Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County

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