

EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK



Bringing a new opportunity to Alameda County cities and unincorporated areas

BACKGROUND

The National League of Cities (NLC) is partnering with the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) to support local officials in developing and strengthening early childhood systems to ensure that young children in our cities grow up safe, healthy, and ready to learn. Sixteen cities and communities from across the country, including Alameda County, convened by CSSP's Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Network for Communities (EC-LINC) and NLC, created a framework and action guide called [Early Learning Communities](#):

[Building Blocks for Success](#). The goal is to provide a toolkit to “put all of the pieces together” at the local level to help young children thrive.

In Alameda County, First 5, along with Oakland Starting Smart and Strong and the Alameda County Early Care and Education Program, is using the framework to convene city leaders to ensure local policies meet the needs of families with young children. This partnership is the Alameda County Early Learning Communities Network.

WHY FOCUS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LEARNING?

We know that city leaders are on the front lines of improving lives for young children and their families at a time when the Bay Area is one of the most expensive places to live.

But quality childcare is not all that young children need. Parent support programs, like home visiting, are critical to ensuring a child's development is optimum.



A family of four in Alameda County must make **\$117,000** a year to meet their basic needs.



90% of a child's brain development happens before age 5.

For families working to make ends meet, quality, affordable childcare options are essential.

Overall, studies show that children who have high quality early childhood experiences are more likely to graduate from high school, be employed, and less likely to be arrested. Early childhood programs also mean a big boost for our economy.



The average cost of center-based childcare for an infant is almost **\$19,000**, more than tuition at UC Berkeley.



Economist and Nobel Laureate James Heckman found that for every **\$1** invested in early childhood there is a later return of **\$8**. It's a win-win!



WHAT IS THE ALAMEDA COUNTY EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK?

First 5 Alameda County invited city and unincorporated area leaders in Alameda County to join our Early Learning Communities Network. Five cities are participating: Alameda, Emeryville, Hayward, Newark and Oakland. Network participants are being guided through five sessions throughout 2019 to create an Early Learning Community Action Plan and will be eligible to apply for funding from First 5 Alameda County in 2020 to implement a portion of the plan. Participation in the Early Learning Communities Network entails:

1) PARTICIPATING IN FIVE EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK SESSIONS:

Held once every other month from 9 am-noon, the sessions will follow the NLC and CSSP Early Learning Action Guide. The sessions will begin by reviewing each Building Block and hearing from speakers from the county and beyond who are implementing programs and policy changes influencing the Building Block in their community. Cities and unincorporated areas are encouraged to build a team of city and school district leaders and community-based organizations to work on the plan and attend these sessions.

2) BUILDING AN EARLY LEARNING ACTION PLAN:

There will be time during the sessions for cities and communities to assess their current progress and begin to build an action plan. There is some expectation that additional work on the plan will occur between meetings by the cities and communities participating.

3) IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY LEARNING ACTION PLANS:

After the last session in November of 2019, cities and communities will be eligible to apply for grant funds from First 5 Alameda County to implement a portion of their plan.

EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES SESSION OVERVIEW:

- **Kick- Off Event:** Why Early Learning Cities? **(January 30, 2019)**
- **Session 1:** Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority – Part 1 **(March 28, 2019)**
- **Session 2:** Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority – Part 2 **(May 23, 2019)**
- **Session 3:** Quality Services the Work for All Young Children and their Families **(July 25, 2019)**
- **Session 4:** Neighborhoods Where Families Can Thrive **(September 26, 2019)**
- **Session 5:** Policies that Support and are Responsive to Families **(November 21, 2019)**

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ALAMEDA COUNTY EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK?

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