

EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK

Bringing a new opportunity to Alameda County cities and unincorporated areas

BACKGROUND

The National League of Cities (NLC) has partnered 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 guide is intended to provide a toolkit to "put all of the pieces together" at the local level to help young children thrive.

WHY FOCUS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD AND 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.

A family of four in Alameda County must make nearly \$118,000 a year to meet their basic needs.



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

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



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

The average cost of center-based child care for an infant is almost \$22,000, more than tuition at UC Berkeley.



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.

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!

ALAMEDA COUNTY EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK

In Alameda County, First 5, along with Oakland Starting Smart and Strong and the Alameda County Early Care and Education Program, formed the Alameda County Early Learning Communities Network (ELCN) to apply the [Early Learning Communities: Building Blocks for Success](#) framework and convene city leaders to ensure local policies meet the needs of families with young children.

First 5 Alameda County invited city and unincorporated area leaders in Alameda County to join our ELCN. Participation entailed:

1) PARTICIPATION IN FIVE EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK SESSIONS

Held once every other month, sessions followed the NLC and CSSP Early Learning Action Guide. The sessions included reviewing each Building Block and hearing from speakers from the county and beyond who are implementing programs and policy changes influencing the Building Blocks in their community. Cities and unincorporated areas were 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

Participating cities and communities assessed their current progress and began to build an action plan.

3) IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY LEARNING ACTION PLANS

After the last session in November of 2019, cities and communities were eligible to apply for grant funds from First 5 Alameda County to implement a portion of their plan, with grants running through June 2021.

ALAMEDA COUNTY ELCN GRANTEEES

Below is a summary of the four partnership awards and their respective scopes of work. (Note: Some activities have moved to virtual/digital offerings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

COMMUNITY CHILD CARE COUNCIL (4Cs) OF ALAMEDA COUNTY (LEAD AGENCY FOR HAYWARD)

The grant to 4Cs of Alameda County supports an ELCN Coordinator to lead the City of Hayward in implementing a comprehensive Early Learning Action Plan, which includes incorporating community input. The funding also supports the hosting of Parent Cafes, implementing fatherhood specific programming, and a bookmobile.

CITY OF ALAMEDA

The City of Alameda's grant supports the implementation of a comprehensive Early Learning Action Plan, which includes the planning and development of several parent support programs. The partnership team promoted the Year of the Young Child throughout the city in 2020 and continues to implement a variety of parent engagement and support activities via a newly purchased mobile family resource center vehicle.

CITY OF NEWARK

The grant to the City of Newark supports the implementation of a comprehensive Early Learning Action Plan, which includes supporting a promotora program for Latinx parents and implementing the Abriendo Puertas parent engagement and leadership program. Funding primarily supports staff time and staff training to support the promotoras group; scholarships for families to participate in recreational activities at the recreation and aquatic center; and increasing developmental screenings.

YMCA OF THE EAST BAY (LEAD AGENCY FOR EMERYVILLE)

YMCA of the East Bay's grant supports the implementation of a comprehensive Early Learning Action Plan, which includes supporting an Early Childhood Education apprentice program for high school students and community members. This builds off the successful model already implemented at Castlemont High School, as well as using a model for parents that is being expanded in partnership with First 5, Alameda County Social Services Agency, and the YMCA of the East Bay. Funding is also used for fatherhood support programming and support for community members seeking to open family child care businesses.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ALAMEDA COUNTY EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK?

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