

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

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

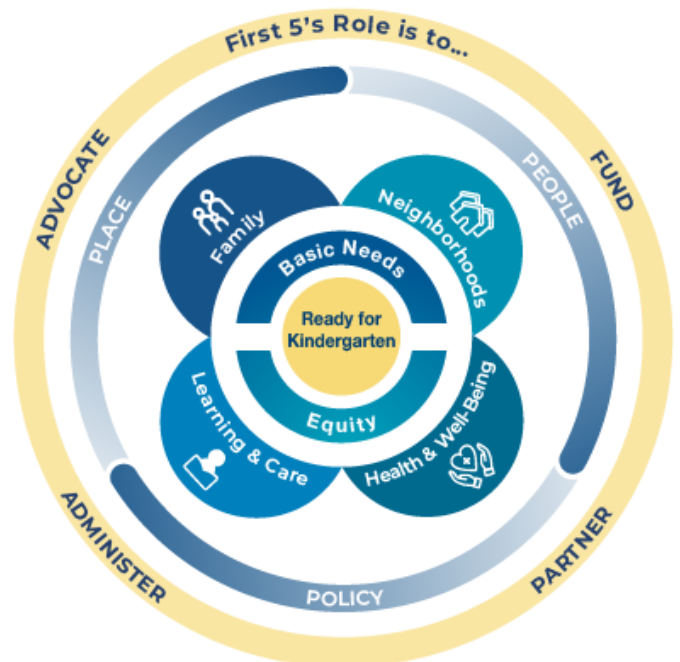
- First 5 Alameda County Kindergarten Readiness Assessment 21-22

First 5 Alameda County’s work is to *fund, partner, administer, and advocate* to ensure families have what they need every step of the way along the [“Road to Kindergarten Readiness.”](#) With the influx of new local resources and the leveraging of federal and state resources, this moment represents a rare and invaluable opportunity to evolve our local early childhood system and strengthen the network of care that serves the county’s children, families, and communities. In service to secure more investments to expand community and family-centered programming, we are proud of what First 5 Alameda County accomplished in its first year of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan implementation. [Our investments continue to deliver high-quality results, reaching 30,000 people last year alone, including 16,000 children, 11,000 parents/caregivers, and 5,000 providers.](#)

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

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

- Dr. Manuel Pastor,
[speaking to First 5 Alameda County](#)
[All-Staff meeting, March 9, 2023](#)



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

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

#1 SYSTEM READYING, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND CAPACITY

- **Continued to build and scale the local early childhood system with new revenue.** Our fiscal outlook is strong given new funds, coupled with a clean audit and a balanced budget. While First 5 Alameda County will be experiencing significant growth in the coming year, all other First 5 agencies around the state have declining revenues and are facing layoffs and program cuts. Our colleagues throughout California, and beyond, are looking to us as a model for leveraging funding, policy advocacy, and equity-centered systems building as they manage challenging local circumstances.
 - Locally, First 5 was selected as the Early Education Implementation Partner for the Oakland Children's Initiative (Measure AA), adding \$23 million to our annual budget starting in FY22-23.
 - At the local, state and federal level, in FY22-23, we received \$2.5 million* from the Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA), \$1.4 million annual allocation from Alameda Alliance for Health (AAH), and \$2.5 million annual allocation from Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA). We also received a \$375K annual allocation of multi-year grants from philanthropy and a gift of \$1.4 million from Child, Family and Community Services (CFCS).
- **Restructured the agency and conducted hiring to ensure we have staffing and infrastructure to administer new incoming public funding,** including roles focused on compliance, health, advocacy and government affairs, performance management, planning and project management, financial budgeting and forecasting, and communications. The hiring and structural changes will continue into 2023 and beyond, as we have entered a three- to five-year building phase. We seek to retain and recruit a workforce that reflects the diversity and cultural fabric of Alameda County, support staff development and professional growth, ensure regulatory compliance, and effectively implement existing and new initiatives.

#2 OPERATIONALIZING EQUITY

- **Completed a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment using a participatory, community-centered research-to-action approach that resulted in data from more than 3,000 Alameda County community members.** The 2021-22 [Kindergarten Readiness Assessment](#) (KRA) findings and recommendations show how our county may improve kindergarten readiness in the overlapping environments that influence children's readiness—communities, families, and schools. First 5 uses the KRA findings to inform our programs, investments, and [policy advocacy](#).

*Out of the \$2.5 million, \$1 million is a one-time allocation for FY22-24 and \$718K is an annual allocation.

EQUITY STATEMENT

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

As a part of this commitment, we use our resources to redress (to set right) these injustices by:

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

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

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

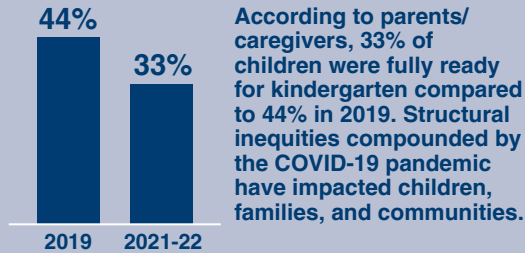
- **Continued centering equity in our programming, investments, and advocacy, and intentionally engaging in dialogue regarding organizational culture.** First 5 has used equity to inform our work since our founding in 1998. Over the years, we have intentionally built upon and strengthened this commitment, including in our 2017-22 and 2022-27 strategic plans. As part of our evolution, in 2022-23, we engaged in a participatory agencywide learning and development process to update our equity statement to encompass our current work, intentions for continuous learning and improvement, and commitment to accountability (see left column).
- **Ensured that our governing body represents our commitment to community-directed investments by appointing a representative of a parent- and community-based building group as a First 5 Commissioner.**

#3 EVOLVING TO MORE COMMUNITY-CENTERED PROGRAMMING

- **Launched key programmatic and community investments, including:**
 - A new division of Pediatric Care Coordination encompassing our existing family serving programs out of pediatric health settings, including Help Me Grow’s developmental screening, outreach, referral, and navigation and the DULCE’s model health, resource, and legal supports
 - A strategic parent partnership program focused on supporting Black mothers and birthing people and on investing in community-based strategies to disrupt inequities and disparities in birth outcomes
 - A strategic planning process with our Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) grantees in partnership with a local, BIPOC, woman-owned firm.
 - The 2023 Fatherhood Summit coordinated by our Fatherhood Initiative and supported by a philanthropic investment of \$240,000

KINDERGARTEN READINESS REQUIRES SYSTEMS CHANGE

The [2021-22 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment \(KRA\)](#) findings illustrate the need for investment in the early childhood system and policy advocacy for structural changes. For more on the conditions facing communities, families, and children, see Alameda County's Context: Data for Action in the full Strategic Plan (page 10) or our [Data for Action tool](#), and First 5's investments in Appendix A, page 44 of the full Strategic Plan.



KEY KRA FINDINGS:

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

For more on the conditions facing communities, families, and children, see the [2021-22 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Executive Summary](#).

These and other achievements, plus additional contributing factors over the past year, set the stage for the next phase of First 5's 2022-27 strategic plan implementation.

The new local revenue and scaling of programs, by tapping into federal and state allocations, afford an opportunity to reimagine a more equitable early childhood system. In doing so, our lessons learned and local success could very well serve as a model and an example for state and federal policies that recognize and invest in child care and the labor of providers as the public good that they are.

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

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