Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I am pleased to present First 5 San Francisco’s Strategic Plan for 2016-2021. This plan will guide First 5’s work over the next five years, reinforcing successful strategies of the past and present while evolving the organization in new and exciting directions.

First 5 San Francisco believes in the unlimited potential of all children, whether they are bright-eyed babies bonding with their loving parents, toddlers taking their first wobbly steps, or young preschoolers learning their letters and colors and how to play well with one another. Early childhood is a truly special time for all involved. It is a time of discovery and exploration for children, as their brains work in overdrive to absorb the world around them and develop the necessary knowledge and skills for the life ahead. It is also a wondrous and rewarding time for parents, teachers, and other adults in children’s lives.

Raising and caring for a child in today’s world is not easy. Every parent has their moments of anxiety and stress, when they turn to family, friends, and professionals for help and support. Many families lack the privileges, money, and basic resources that others take for granted, which can make raising a child even more challenging. Many of the professionals that work with our youngest children do so with great dedication and compassion, but may lack opportunities for continuing education and professional growth. These are all areas in which First 5 hopes to make an impact.

Under its new strategic plan, First 5 San Francisco aims to be a big voice for the littlest San Franciscans. The plan encompasses some familiar goals and strategies, envisions new goals and opportunities, and embraces a shift in its organizational roles. The new plan is organized around four impact areas: systems change, child development / early care and education, family support, and child health. The latter three are absolute necessities to children’s healthy development and well-being – areas in which we have historically invested and will continue to do. However, First 5’s revenues are diminishing, so the organization goes forward in these areas with a determination to seek out new funding opportunities and leverage existing relationships and resources with a renewed focus on innovation. Systems change is a new emphasis for First 5, and it is through this strategy that First 5 seeks to capitalize on its strengths in analyzing and interpreting data, convening leaders and experts from across disciplines to problem-solve, and advocating for the needs of babies, young children, and their families.

Throughout its history, San Francisco has been a hub of diversity and innovation, attracting people from all over the world, generating new knowledge and approaches, and continuously reinventing itself. Right now, the city is in the middle of the latest of these massive transformations, with significant implications for its residents, including its youngest children and their families. With this new strategic plan, First 5 aims to harness the city’s spirit of innovation and inclusiveness in service of making San Francisco a place where children and families from all backgrounds and walks of life can share in the city’s prosperity and realize their full potential.

Best regards,

Laurel Kloomok
Executive Director
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ACRONYMS USED IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN

DCYF – Department of Children, Youth and Their Families
ECE – early care and education
FRC – Family Resource Center
IMPACT – First 5 Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive initiative
OCOF – Our Children, Our Families Council
OECE – Mayor’s Office of Early Care and Education
PFA – Preschool for All
Prop 10 – Proposition 10
Prop C – Proposition C
Prop H – Proposition H
QRIS – Quality Rating and Improvement System
SFDPH – San Francisco Department of Public Health
SFUSD – San Francisco Unified School District
SOAR – Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results Framework
SPAC - Strategic Plan Advisory Committee
SECTION I: CONTEXT AND CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

Introduction
Extensive research shows that a child’s brain develops most dramatically during the first five years of life. Positive early developmental experiences are critical to assuring that children’s first years lay a strong foundation for their later success. By focusing specifically on the first five years, First 5 San Francisco strives to improve the likelihood that all children in San Francisco will be healthy, prepared for school and given access to key resources.

Since its inception in 1998, First 5 San Francisco has established itself as an influential systems change agent and thought leader for issues facing young children and their families. As of October 2015, the First 5 San Francisco Commission has invested over $270 million in comprehensive programs for early childhood development, family strengthening and other supportive services. The implementation of our last strategic plan solidly established universal preschool for four year-olds and family resource centers as critical resources toward optimal child development and school readiness. In fy13-14, 5,642 3 and 4 year olds participated in Preschool for All supported early education programming and 11,916 adults and children participated in family resource center activities. Preschool and family resource center staff were supported by investments to grow staff knowledge and practice to enhance the quality of their services. Our investments in all programs in fy13-14 was approximately $29 million.

Our evaluation of our activities show we are impacting children’s and families’ lives in positive ways. We know more children than before are entering kindergarten with preschool experience and are more kindergarten ready. Parents at family resource centers are learning parenting skills and reducing the use of ineffective parenting behaviors. Our investments in providers have demonstrable impacts on skills and use of evidence based practices.

The 2016-2021 strategic plan will build on these accomplishments and the work we know remains to be done for children and families. The strategic plan will describe our adjustments to significant changes in our fiscal environment. First the recently formed Office of Early Care and Education (OECE) has been designated the new steward for implementation of Preschool for All. Second, with the 17th anniversary of the passage of Proposition 10 – the Commission’s dedicated funding source– First 5 San Francisco must make concrete plans to prepare for decreased annual state allocations and the depletion of reserve funds, which have allowed for investment beyond our current revenue allocation.

This strategic plan refocuses our priorities to allow us to continue playing a key role in supporting the health, development and well-being of San Francisco’s youngest citizens and their families.

With this plan, we will implement a bold organizational strategy that provides continuity with past successes, while also exploring and innovating within our traditional Impact Areas. The new Strategic Plan will guide us as we transition from focusing primarily on direct service investments to fulfilling additional and unique roles as an advocate, systems change agent, and program innovator.
Our Strategic Plan Process

The development of the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan presented First 5 San Francisco Commissioners, staff and external stakeholders with the opportunity to:

- Examine where the organization is today;
- Review the impact of our past efforts in supporting families and children;
- Create a compelling vision for where we want to be in five years, and
- Chart a pragmatic course of action for implementation.

The planning process was designed and facilitated by MIG, Inc., a Berkeley-based consulting firm, in partnership with First 5 San Francisco leadership and staff. Over an eight-month period, the Project Team met regularly to discuss essential functions and unique roles of First 5 San Francisco, and to formulate goals and strategies.

At the outset, MIG reviewed background documents and interviewed four key community stakeholders to gather their insights on the organization’s assets and needs. To further inform the process and collect additional input from key stakeholders, the Project Team conducted the following meetings:

- Two retreats for First 5 San Francisco Commissioners;
- Ongoing discussions with grantees and funding partners;
- Special Commission meeting of Program and Fiscal Committees; and,
- Three meetings for the Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (SPAC).

Meeting participants engaged in thoughtful and in-depth discussions to assess future roles for the organization, and to prioritize which goals and strategies should be pursued. Their recommendations significantly informed the goals, outcomes, and strategies for this Strategic Plan.

Changing Fiscal and Organizational Climate

Significant changes in the funding environment have occurred over the last few years. First 5 Commissions in California are funded by Proposition 10 (1998), which set a tax of fifty cents on each package of tobacco product sold in California. Each county receives Proposition 10 (Prop 10) revenues in proportion to the number of live births in that county. Due to decreased tobacco use in California, First 5 Commissions across the state are experiencing and planning for a steady decline in Prop 10 revenue allocations. For San Francisco, revenues declined by roughly 11% between 2010 and 2014, which resulted in a loss of approximately $700,000.

Proposition H (2004) established funds for universal preschool access for all San Francisco’s children – creating the PFA initiative. Over a ten year period, First 5 San Francisco oversaw the development and resource allocation of this universal preschool program. Despite fluctuations in allocation due to the 2008-2013 economic downturn, First 5 San Francisco was able to leverage state and local Prop 10 funding to operate the program.
Recent legislative and organizational changes within the City, ushered in by the passing of Proposition C (2015), create both challenges and opportunities for First 5 San Francisco’s future. Proposition C (Prop C) transitions PFA oversight and fund allocation to the Mayor’s recently established OECE in FY15-16. Although First 5 San Francisco will no longer operate PFA, we will play an expanded role in building the capacity of early childhood providers to meet early learning quality standards. As the steward of the developing Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), First 5 San Francisco will expand its targeted focus on preschool to a citywide 0-5 platform in all early childhood settings.

Another result of Prop C is the establishment of the Our Children, Our Families Council (OCOF), an advisory body co-led by the Mayor and Superintendent of Schools. The OCOF Council will be responsible for creating a shared outcomes framework that articulates milestones for children, youth and families.

The chart below depicts how the funding balance, revenues and expenditures for First 5 San Francisco have shifted during the years 2009-2015 and how they are projected to shift throughout the new Strategic Plan cycle of 2016-2021.

These major shifts create an opportunity for First 5 San Francisco to enhance collaboration and alignment with other City departments. At the same time, as First 5 San Francisco’s direct responsibility for the PFA program decreases, the organization is positioned to move into a much-needed leadership and system-weaving role.
**SOAR Assessment**

As part of the strategic planning process, First 5 San Francisco staff, Commissioners, and SPAC members assessed the current context and conditions for the organization. The Project Team used the SOAR framework, a strengths-based whole system approach, to define organizational Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results. The key findings from this detailed analysis are presented below.

### Strengths

1. **What are we doing well?**
2. **What key achievements are we most proud of?**
3. **What are we known for?**
4. **What makes us unique?**

- Investing $32 million to serve 20,000 City residents through 200 community programs, including 147 preschools and 25 Family Resource Centers (FRCs)
- Providing excellent stewardship, **incubation and implementation of PFA program**
- Defining and measuring quality in early care and education (ECE) with a local, statewide and national lens
- Developing and maintaining a **robust system** of Family Resource Centers
- Establishing San Francisco as a regional anchor for assessment, capacity building and effective quality improvement strategies by **piloting regional QRIS**
- Being recognized as a regional thought leader, evaluator, and “think tank” by system players

### Opportunities

1. **How can we reframe perceived challenges to be seen as opportunities?**
2. **What external forces or trends may positively impact First 5 San Francisco?**
3. **What are key areas of untapped potential?**

- Shifting the organizational focus from direct service investments to systems change work
- Transitioning PFA to the OECE to focus on incubating **equity-driven** demonstration projects
- Building on PFA and quality improvement work to make greater regional contributions as QRIS system builder
- Leveraging advocacy role and strong relationships with **key system partners** to secure additional funding
- Investing and focusing on **whole child activities** for 0-3 age range in multiple systems, including preschool and health
- **Leveraging opportunities** to focus on specific underserved communities with unique needs through collaborative partnerships
• Addressing gaps in family support systems and child health practices with the same level of intensity as ECE
• Deepening family support investments to **transform the field** and increase enduring positive impacts for families

### Aspirations
1. **How can we evolve to be more impactful, bold and innovative?**

• Creating a **sustainable funding strategy** that drives resources toward activities that meet our mission
• Making strategic investments that focus on **incubation pilots** for progressive policy change
• Being a leader and **strong voice** for all of childhood, even beyond age 5
• Creating demand for our presence as thought partners and collaborators by bringing useful perspectives and skills to the table
• Demonstrating how we impact outcomes for children and families by creating a compelling narrative with supporting data
• Promoting San Francisco as a demonstration City and a national model for early child development and family support systems
• Convening effective collaboratives to catalyze change at the City/County, state and federal level

### Results
1. **What measurable results do we want to see? What measurable results will we be known for?**
2. **Considering our strengths, opportunities, and aspirations, what meaningful measures will indicate that we are on track in achieving our goals?**

• Achieving the most important result of our work—**better outcomes for children** and families
• Generating new funding streams through focused partnerships
• Pursuing an organizational strategy that better positions First 5 San Francisco to lead systems change initiatives
• Incubating demonstration projects that achieve more **equitable** outcomes for all
• Establishing First 5 San Francisco as a recognized leader in key areas and critical partner in other areas
• Tying effective policy and systems change work with funding streams
A Snapshot of San Francisco

San Francisco is small in size, but enjoys a rich and diverse population of children. The diversity is marked by differences in ethnicity, language and cultural traditions. Many San Francisco families are recently immigrated and learning to acculturate to our community and its social systems, including schools. Socio-economic diversity and the impact of poverty are demonstrating strong influences on the outcomes for children and families. A sample of data describing characteristics of 0 – 5 year olds and their families is presented in this section. These characteristics are sometimes associated with social and well-being outcomes, including school readiness and success.

A fuller portrait of the experience of young children in San Francisco can be found in our First Steps Report 2014 – a collection of statistics, data and indicators regarding 0 – 5 year olds in San Francisco.

Demographics of Young Children

The historically diverse City of San Francisco has the fourth highest population in California, with over 850,000 residents. By 2030, the City’s population is projected to grow by approximately 10%.

Recently, families with children have been leaving San Francisco for other parts of the Bay Area at unprecedented rates. Contributing factors to the flight of families from the City include the high cost of housing and early care and education, public safety concerns, and perceptions of lower quality public schools. Between 2007 and 2012, the overall population increased while the number of children in the City under 6 years of age decreased by approximately 9%.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Population</td>
<td>765,035</td>
<td>852,693</td>
<td>87,658</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five and Younger</td>
<td>48,743</td>
<td>44,311</td>
<td>-4,432</td>
<td>-9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The diversity of children age 0-5 is also increasing across the City, as shown below. The most striking change was in the number of African American children 0-5, which fell by two thousand between 2007 and 2014, from 3,968 to 1,902, over 50% decrease. The proportions of Caucasian children decreased as well, about 5%. The proportion of Latino/Hispanic and Asian children increased slightly. The proportion of children 0-5 of two or more races nearly doubled. Altogether, children of color comprised about 64% of San Francisco’s children aged 5 or under.

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Number of Children Ages 0-5 in San Francisco by Race/Ethnicity, 2007-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of Total 0-5 Population</td>
<td>% of Total 0-5 Population</td>
<td># of Total 0-5 Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>19,919</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>15,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>11,008</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>10,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>10,218</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10,406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3,968</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>1,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or More Races</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The demographic trends make it clear that San Francisco’s children ages 0-5 are increasingly likely to be multiracial, who comprise a growing proportion of the City’s child population.

Economic Self-Sufficiency of San Francisco Families

Children who benefit from enriching, supportive environments early in life are more likely to be ready for school and maintain their academic achievement in subsequent years. Research indicates that children from low-income communities are less likely to be exposed to these developmentally-enriching experiences and relationships, setting the stage for longer term disparities in health, academic success, and overall wellbeing.

The Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard quantifies the minimum income necessary to meet basic needs (housing, food, child care, health care, transportation) without public or private assistance. The Self-Sufficiency Standard (Standard) is a more up-to-date and accurate measure than the official federal poverty level, and is used by many policymakers, advocates and community organizations to make informed decisions on working family issues.

In California, the Standard is determined by county. Overall, 26.8% of households in San Francisco fall below the Self-Sufficiency Standard. However, a closer look at statistics on how various household types in San Francisco meet or fall short of the Self-Sufficiency Standard reveals significant disparities.3

- African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino households are three to four times more likely to fall below the Self-Sufficiency Standard than White households.
- As of 2012, 57% percent of African American/Black households and 48% of Hispanic/Latino households are below the Standard, as compared to only 16% of White households.

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- Households headed by those who are foreign born are twice as likely to fall below the Standard than those headed by native born householders—40% as compared to 20%.
- About 38% of households with children fall below the Standard level of income compared than those without children—38% as compared to 24%.
- Approximately 31% of households headed by women fall below the Standard, compared to only 23% of households headed by men overall.

In addition, income inequality in San Francisco has increased significantly in recent years. Compared to other major cities, San Francisco experienced the highest increase in income inequality between 2007 and 2013. In 2013, San Francisco had the second worst income inequality in the country, with the 95th percentile earning an estimated $423,171, while the bottom 20th percentile earned $24,815, a ratio of 17 to 1.⁴

Local School Readiness Findings
The SFUSD tracks readiness for all entering kindergartners, using a series of school readiness assessments.⁵ Their findings as given in the recently released 2015 Data Report on the Well-Being of Children, Youth and Families by OCOF include:
- As of 2013, only about half of SFUSD kindergartners (45%) started school ready to learn.⁶
  - The students least likely to be ready for kindergarten were Hispanic/Latino students (32% assessed as ready) and African American students (39% assessed as ready).
  - White students were the most likely to be ready for kindergarten (78% assessed as ready).

School readiness is affected by a number of different factors in a child’s early development, including a safe and secure home environment, trusting relationships with parents and other caregivers and physical health. Other readiness factors include exposure to a print- and language-rich environment that supports a large vocabulary and active engagement with the world around them and other children. Measures of children’s school readiness include the following factors, grouped into four overall domains:

- **Self-Care and Motor Skills**
  - Performs basic self-help/self-care tasks
  - Has general physical coordination and ability to manipulate small tools such as pencils correctly

- **Self-Regulation**
  - Able to stay focused and pay attention
  - Able to control impulses and handle frustration

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⁵ Students assessed as ready for kindergarten must receive at least a four out of five in all domains on the Desired Results Developmental Profile and a score of at least 60 on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening. Social Policy Research Associates, Data Report for Our Children, Our Families Council, 2015.
• Comforts self
• Follows directions, plays and participates cooperatively, and negotiates solutions

• **Social Expression**
  • Has expressive abilities and uses them appropriately, including expressing needs and wants, empathy with others
  • Relates well to adults
  • Is curious and has enthusiasm for learning
  • Engages in symbolic play

• **Kindergarten Academics**
  • Recognizes letters, shapes and colors
  • Counts 10 objects correctly
  • Engages with books
  • Can write own first name and recognize rhyming words

Regardless of family income, first language, or heritage, several factors are associated with greater readiness for school. These characteristics are:

**Factors that influence readiness patterns**

Source: Kindergarten Readiness Assessment 2009-10, Applied Survey Research.

Recognition of these factors have helped to direct our efforts in past strategic plans and will continue to shape the approach to our work.
Quality Preschool Participation

Research demonstrates that students with preschool experience are more likely to be ready for kindergarten than those without it. Participation in high-quality preschool also mitigated other risk factors for low kindergarten readiness, including economic disadvantage.\(^7\)

Participation in quality ECE programs has steadily increased, but access to affordable ECE programs remains a challenge for many families. Many low-income and middle-class families still face substantial barriers in access to high-quality ECE programs and associated developmental screenings. Expanded access through universal PFA and FRCs has helped improve matters, but there is still a long way to go.

- Preschool enrollment in San Francisco has increased since 2005, likely due to an increase in public funding for free or reduced cost options. In 2013, 71% of three- and four-year olds in San Francisco attended preschool, compared to 61% in 2005—considerably higher than the rate in California as a whole (48% in 2013).\(^8\)
  - Most of the gains in attendance were among African American (68% in 2007, 79% in 2013) and Latino children (54% in 2007, 80% in 2013).
- As of 2014, 77% of three-five year olds in San Francisco attended preschool, compared to 61% statewide and 60% nationwide.
- Young children in San Francisco are substantially more likely to enter kindergarten with some pre-K experience than their peers statewide (38%).
- In spite of increased enrollment in preschool, gaps in access to early care and education persist throughout San Francisco.
  - Demand for child care often outstrips supply. In 2012, about one-third (32%) of families eligible for subsidized child care did not receive it. Families with children ages 0-2 comprise 62% of those with unmet child care needs.\(^9\)
  - Middle-class families also fall through the gaps. Many earn an income that is too high to qualify for subsidized child care and too low to afford the high cost of quality child care in San Francisco.
- In 2013-2014, nearly all San Francisco’s licensed early care and education providers who completed the rating process were rated as good (4-5 on a scale of 1-7).\(^10\)
- About 38% of families receiving vouchers for care choose to enroll their children in unregulated, license-exempt early care and education settings, for which no evidence related to quality currently exists.\(^11\)

Collaborative Efforts at Local and Regional Levels

As First 5 San Francisco redefines its focus, the Commission is poised to take on new leadership roles in collaborative partnerships to meet emerging needs for children and families. Opportunities for collaboration are abundant at the local and regional levels.

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Local Opportunities
First 5 San Francisco will continue to serve as an important resource to City and County partners by providing strategic leadership and specialized expertise. For example, First 5 San Francisco’s knowledge and experience gained through over ten years of implementing and administering the PFA program is strongly informing its joint efforts with the OECE. First 5 San Francisco is also recognized as a leading source for data analysis and evaluation on issues related to young children and families.

First 5 San Francisco can expand its capabilities as a data-driven thought leader. Providing data to systems managers and policy makers can create an impetus for action. First 5 San Francisco’s past initiatives have yielded valuable data that presents a detailed reflection of the experiences and circumstances of young children. First 5 San Francisco will continue to present data from previous and future projects to support targeted service implementation.

The strategies in our four Impact Areas were developed through the lens of our emerging focus on whole, coordinated systems extending throughout the City/County of San Francisco. To be successful, First 5 San Francisco will align its efforts and collaborate with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders, including City departments, providers and community-based organizations. Key public partners will include OECE; SFUSD; the Office of the Mayor; the Human Services Agency; the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF); San Francisco Public Library; and the Department of Public Health (SFDPH).

In addition, First 5 San Francisco can also move into a stronger advocacy role, communicating widely about the value of early childhood education and additional developmental experiences for young children. The OCOF Council is calling upon First 5 San Francisco’s expertise as it works in parallel to the OECE to implement more supportive early childhood policies in the City.

Regional Opportunities
 Agencies, foundations and First 5 Commissions in the region have indicated that they are looking to San Francisco for leadership, inspiration and collaboration. With cutting-edge initiatives such as PFA and QRIS, First 5 San Francisco has elevated San Francisco to a demonstration City and progressive model for its counterparts. By working actively with partners and exporting best practices, First 5 San Francisco can continue to spur change not just within the City/County, but across the region. Together we can move forward to achieve better outcomes for children and families — the most important result of our work.

First 5 San Francisco continues to work with First 5 Commissions throughout the region, including membership in the First 5 Bay Area group that includes 11 counties in the Bay Area. First 5 San Francisco’s policy priorities are guided by the following First 5 Bay Area regional policy objectives:

- **Developmental Screenings**: Promote comprehensive developmental screening at recommended intervals as part of well-baby examinations.

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12 Bay Area First 5 Policy Platform, [http://www.first5kids.org/bay/policybrief](http://www.first5kids.org/bay/policybrief)
• **Access to Quality:** Improve access to existing high quality developmentally appropriate early care and education.

• **Prevention:** Increase investments in prevention efforts to foster parenting skills and improve parent-child relationships.

• **Access to Family Supports:** Provide parents, families, and communities with relevant, timely, and culturally appropriate information, education, services, and support.

• **Access to Family Economic Stability Supports:** Improve access to existing programs that support the economic stability of family.

• **Pre-K to K Transition:** Ensure that early care and education and K-12 programs work together to provide seamless transitions for children entering kindergarten.

For the past three years, First 5 San Francisco has developed a data system on ECE quality with six Bay Area counties. Collecting consistent data is a challenge as different counties are at different stages of progress. To address that issue, the participating counties decided that San Francisco will host a regional data coordinator for the system, with further development funded by the other counties. First 5 San Francisco has secured First 5 California IMPACT (Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive) funds for Phase One and will apply for Phase Two funds to help staff the regional database coordination effort.

First 5 IMPACT is an innovative approach that forges partnerships between First 5 California and counties to help children ages 0 to 5 and their families thrive by increasing the number of high-quality early learning settings that provide family support services. IMPACT funds will be invested in initiatives that provide families with the information and support they need to optimize their children’s development and learning, both inside and outside the home. In addition, conversations are proceeding with First 5 California about programs and platforms including family engagement, Help Me Grow and coordinated local and statewide developmental screening.

Nationally, First 5 San Francisco can continue to share lessons learned and best practices as other counties and states advance their own early childhood initiatives. Similarly, we welcome and seek out opportunities to learn from other partners and import new ideas and proven strategies.

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SECTION II:  
FRAME FOR THE FUTURE

Vision, Mission and Values
In formulating this new Strategic Plan, we revised and refined our Vision, Mission and Value Statements to create a clear focus for a new direction. The revised Statements are more succinct and targeted to clarify the Commission’s continuing role in supporting all of San Francisco’s young children and families and the ultimate outcomes toward which we are working.

Vision Statement
All children, birth to five, will be safe, healthy, and thrive in supportive, nurturing, and loving families and communities. They will start school eager to learn and grow with confidence and connections to families, community, and society.

Mission Statement
The mission of First 5 San Francisco is to advance a shared commitment to support young children, from birth to five, and their families with abundant opportunities to be healthy, to learn and to grow.

Values
First 5 San Francisco’s Value Statements were reconsidered and revised based on currently adopted values and values expressed during organizational planning. The following values will guide our work moving forward:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Equity and Social Justice
- Integrity
- Knowledge and Effectiveness
- Partnership
- Respect
- Stewardship

The First 5 San Francisco Strategic Plan Framework summarizes the foundational elements of our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan and shows the relationships among all components of the Plan.
**Guiding Principles**

With over 14 years of experience as funders and program developers, First 5 San Francisco has gained critical insights into programmatic impacts on children and families. Through frequent interactions with funded partners and other stakeholders, we have observed family achievements and challenges in accessing resources for early care and education and other services supporting families. We have observed the impact our work has on children, families and the providers that serve them.

In our planning discussions, some common themes, lessons learned and observations emerged that implicitly impact our approach to our work. These key themes represent basic, guiding principles for First 5 San Francisco. The following guiding principles inspired and informed First 5 San Francisco’s 2016-2021 strategies.

**Prioritizing Better Outcomes for Children and Families**

First 5 San Francisco believes that the well-being of children and families is the core of a healthy and well-functioning community. Improved outcomes for all children and families are the overall focus and defining measure of success of our work.

**Increasing Equity and Closing the Opportunity Gap**

First 5 San Francisco is committed to advancing equity and pursuing equitable outcomes in all aspects of our work. We consider the needs of diverse families and communities throughout our planning and programming efforts. We are dedicated to assessing where opportunity gaps in access to resources and services exist and developing proactive strategies to address those gaps. First 5 San Francisco will take a leading role in piloting equity-driven demonstration projects that can spur transformative change for children, their families and the systems that serve them.

**Building and Preserving Attachments and Relationships**

First 5 San Francisco will continue to leverage our strong relationships with grantees and other community-based organizations to strengthen linkages between the local communities and other City/County departments. We will also continue to deepen, protect and secure attachments of children with parents, caregivers, and the larger community.

**Supporting and Enhancing Quality Improvement**

First 5 San Francisco will assist early childhood education partners and providers in overcoming barriers to quality improvement. Continuing to manage and innovatively enhance the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) within the City is one of our most crucial roles. We will continue to improve the quality of early care and education settings by providing training and technical assistance to families, providers and partners. Instead of working in isolation, we will leverage opportunities for common approaches to QRIS on regional, state and national levels.

In addition to QRIS, First 5 San Francisco is committed to enhancing the quality of family support systems. We will develop quality assessments for family support and train staff using best practices. We will continue to improve our Family Resource Center (FRC) model to meet the specific needs of local communities. First 5 San Francisco will provide high quality and responsive support services to enrich the lives of young children and their families.
Deepening Family Support and Engagement
First 5 San Francisco will build upon our work in FRCs to deepen engagement with families. We aspire for FRCs to function as platforms for parents to build deeper connections to their children, other families and communities. We will seek additional partners to expand the reach of FRCs to better serve families and impact children’s well-being. First 5 San Francisco will investigate the potential of mobile and social network technology to better connect parents to resources and information.

Fostering Innovation
First 5 San Francisco will leverage our expertise and collaborative relationships to innovate cutting-edge ideas, practices and approaches to better serve young children and their families. We will work with key system players to secure funding and resources to bring viable new models to scale.

Approaching System as a Whole
First 5 San Francisco recognizes the need within the City for overall coordination between the early childhood education, social services and public health / medical arenas. First 5 San Francisco aspires to maximize impact by working as a systems change agent. We will champion a broad array of collaborations with the aim of:

- Integrating systems such that families experience seamless services and supports; reconciling different approaches to outreach and interface with families;
- Facilitating data sharing across systems to prevent duplication of intake and enable service coordination;
- Coordinating funding through joint applications; and
- Eventually reporting cross-system outcome data.

Currently, San Francisco lacks an integrated system to identify, refer and serve children with potential developmental delays. We commit to using our leadership capacity, expertise as an evaluator and data provider, and expanded roles as an advocate and convener to help create this integrated system. We will assist in building multi-departmental strategies to access funding for collaborative initiatives.

Strategic Direction and Organizational Strategy
From the outset of the strategic planning process, it was clear that the changing context in which First 5 San Francisco is now operating demanded shifts in strategic direction and organizational strategy. More specifically, it requires an evolution in the roles that we pursue in supporting children and families in the City.

With the transition of Preschool for All (PFA) responsibilities, First 5 San Francisco will embrace an evolving identity that includes new roles, functions and collaborative partnerships. Although First 5 San Francisco will continue to perform some of our previous roles, the focus will change, and new roles will take on greater significance. The Project Team reflected on and considered what these new and realigned roles might be.
Through a series of exercises and discussions, First 5 San Francisco staff, the First 5 San Francisco Commission and Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (SPAC) members conceptualized and prioritized the roles that we might most usefully fulfill in the future — what First 5 San Francisco will be — and the functions (and associated strategies) that might be carried out as a part of each role — what First 5 San Francisco will do. The next step was to clarify how these new roles will work together and support each other. To begin the analysis, the Project Team analyzed how First 5 San Francisco currently operates.

The Current Organizational Strategy graphic illustrates how First 5 San Francisco has operated to date. We have primarily operated as a **Funder-Investor**, and through investments, have acted as an agent of **Systems Change**. As a **Program Funder**, First 5 San Francisco has focused its efforts on program design, implementation and grant-making. As a **Capacity Builder**, we have invested in training, technical assistance, support and quality enhancement to build skills and capabilities for families, providers and partners. First 5 San Francisco’s other crucial role — as an **Evaluator** — supports the other roles in an iterative fashion. First research, data analysis, and evidence-based practices feed into what the organization does, then a
retrospective evaluation of success is conducted through data analysis and reporting. This in turn feeds back and informs later investments and activities.

**Revised Organizational Strategy**

Ongoing conversations with planning participants regarding future roles and functions led to the creation of a revised organizational strategy for First 5 San Francisco. The Revised Organizational Strategy graphic below illustrates how First 5 San Francisco’s organizational focus will evolve over the next five years. This is shown in terms of the roles to be played, the functions that support each role and how they work together to leverage our impact. It’s a holistic and iterative process in which all roles are of equal importance, each feeding off and supporting the others. The change will be gradual and will manifest in an increased repertoire of change actions we can use strategically to address the issues, circumstances and outcomes that receive our focus.

To implement our new organizational strategy, we will fulfill three major, cross-cutting umbrella roles: **Strategic Funder-Investor, Convener and System Change Agent**. The more specific roles of **Capacity Builder, Innovator and Advocate** will occur within this context.
As an **Innovator**, First 5 San Francisco will act as a program designer and catalyst, working through strategy, innovation, early design and launch of programs, and balancing funding and resources to help bring new initiatives into fruition. Our **Capacity Builder** role continues and expands the significant work we have done in enhancing and supporting families, providers and partners. As an **Advocate**, we will communicate proactively with all stakeholders; promote the usefulness of Evidence Based Practices; act as a resource to others; conduct media relations; formulate messaging about the importance of issues affecting young children and families; and help advocate for policy change.

As before, our **Evaluator** role supports all other roles in an iterative fashion. Research, data analysis, and Evidence Based Practices will continue to feed into what we do. Retrospective evaluation of successes will be enhanced by adding an emphasis on communications — telling the stories of those impacted — and more thorough data integration so that what we learn helps the entire system of child and family support in the City.

**Rationale for Strategic Investments**

Our organizational strategy and set of priority functions the consensus on how First 5 San Francisco will grow and change and our understanding of child development and school readiness was used to inform the development of strategies for moving forward in 2016-2021. We developed strategies within the longstanding framework of four impact areas – Systems Change, Early Care and Education / Child Development, Family Support and Child Health. We describe our rationale for the development of strategies within each impact area in this section.

**First 5 San Francisco’s rationale for investments in systems change.** First 5 San Francisco is committed to building coordinated systems of support for young children and their families, through a collaboratively focused and unified approach. Aligning with others who share common goals and strategies and leveraging existing funds and services wherever possible is essential to the success of this work, as is pursuing new funding streams in concert with our partners. These efforts will help ensure our children’s critical first five years are filled with positive experiences and resources to support school readiness and school success. By supporting coordination and alignment of the programs and systems that directly affect young children and their families, First 5 San Francisco is improving the chances that the youngest San Franciscans benefit from the best service our health, early education, family support, and other service providers have to offer.

The reality is that many of the challenges facing our youngest children and their families are too varied, complex, and multi-faceted to address in isolation. New literature on “collective impact” suggests that the approach required is more than traditional collaboration; rather it involves the creation of a network that links numerous organizations — including those in government, civil society and the business sector — and helps them to systematically align and coordinate their efforts around a clearly defined goal. In this way we can better focus our limited resources, more seamlessly exchange information for reflection and learning, and thereby increase the likelihood of achieving large-scale, sustained social impact.

**First 5 San Francisco’s rationale for investments in child development.** Abundant research indicates that children who attend high quality early education and preschool benefit socially,
emotionally, and academically. Assuring broad access to high quality early care and education (ECE) can help the most vulnerable children have access to a wide range of developmental experiences and resources, essential to closing persistent achievement gaps in the school-age years. Achievement gaps are essentially opportunity gaps, and we will continue our efforts to create better and more inclusive opportunities for children to learn and grow.

The benefits of attending high quality ECE extends beyond the present day. Investments in early care and education can have up to a 17:1 return rate, meaning that our communities receive $17 for every dollar invested. Children who attend high quality ECE do better in school, are less likely to drop out or to commit crimes later in life, and pay higher taxes as adults. These positive outcomes for individuals add up to substantial benefits for our community.

The promise of early care and education hinges on quality; children and families only benefit if the quality of care is high. Therefore, we must invest both in expanded access and improved quality. Supporting one without the other will not achieve the full promise of early care and education for San Francisco. We cannot simply mandate that more young children, of increasing diversity, enroll in childcare without supporting the educators who will work with them. Support for quality is an essential component of enhancing access. For this reason, we are committed to continuing and increasing efforts to expand active use of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). We believe this will result in more providers reaching higher standards of quality which will translate into more children ready for school.

First 5 San Francisco’s rationale for investments in family support. Recognizing that parents and other caregivers are the primary influence on a child’s development, we will continue investment in family resource centers to support parents/caregivers to build skills and knowledge for their important role in their children’s lives. This effort provides parents/caregivers increased resources and social support networks, facilitates children’s pre-literacy skills and social-emotional development and decreases the impact of risk factors in young children’s homes.

Parents, grandparents and other caregivers are children’s first teachers. Infants and young children benefit from close, caring, and enriching relationships with their family members. Over time, young children who benefit from strong parent-child relationships have greater self-confidence and self esteem, do better in school, and have good relationships with peers. Parents are best able to forge these enduring bonds when they have access to a variety of supports ranging from family and friends to formal parent education programs to experts in child development issues. Creating rich support networks for caregivers enhances their ability to be the best parents they can be.

The array of services provided by FRCs requires a broad spectrum of staff skills and competencies in a field of work that is evolving. FRC staff need to be knowledgeable of child development, family dynamics, and family engagement and possess the skills to implement funded services. Engagement with FRC staff members surfaced their desire for support to enhance the quality of their practice. Supporting the skills and competencies of staff will enhance the quality and effectiveness of the activities they implement and achievement of program goals. As a younger field, few, if any, models for family support program quality
assessment exist. First 5 San Francisco will work with funded partners, stakeholders and field leaders to develop quality assessment and training.

Families access information in many ways and have varying opportunities and willingness to participate in place-based services. Parenting information is increasingly available via mobile communication and social networking technology. For some parents, the availability of on-demand or regularly delivered parenting information is a preferable way to access valuable support and resources. These technologies should be investigated to determine their ability to support all parents—children at all opportunity gap risk levels. These technologies are an opportunity to build parent skills and connect to new forms of community. This modern approach may be valuable for parent populations that First 5 San Francisco has traditionally served and new parent populations that have not participated in other First 5 San Francisco funded services.

**First 5 San Francisco’s rationale for investments in child health.** Children in good health are better able to build the critical social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills they need to thrive. Health is the foundation for strong development in childhood.

Many resources exist to support the health of a young child. These resources are spread across multiple systems of care—including medical, mental health, school district, regional center and human services. Each system has a mandate and approach to care; providing for the whole child can require coordination and collaboration of multiple providers and systems. Too frequently, many families and their providers struggle to achieve the coordination needed to address the child and family’s needs. All the strategies in this Impact Area address aspects of care coordination among different providers, so that these resources can better serve children and families.

Developmental screening—a brief assessment designed to identify children who should receive more intensive diagnosis or assessment—can help link children to the services and supports they need early on. Moreover, these screenings are a good way to help parents understand the typical stages of development for a healthy infant or young child.

Routine developmental screening has emerged as standard practice in a growing number of venues. However, even when children receive developmental screenings, the path to services is not clear. Narrow regulations about which conditions merit early intervention, disconnected systems, and the lack of consistent case management results in delays, inconsistent service, and high levels of stress for families. Providers and families often face these challenges in trying to access early intervention services to investigate and intervene on issues surfaced from developmental screening.

The early intervention that results from screenings can effectively change the course of many conditions, helping to assure that these conditions do not escalate into life-affecting conditions later on in life. For example, children with autism identified early and enrolled in an early intervention program or inclusive early education program show significant improvements in their language, cognitive, social, and motor skills, as well as in their future educational placement.

Experience in other communities suggests organizing developmental screening, referrals, assessment, developmental support services, and family support systems can greatly increase
identification and intervention to address developmental delays. San Francisco is well-positioned to model this type of collaboration and planning to support the emergence of a coordinated system and process of screening, referral and intervention for children and families.

The challenges and barriers for care coordination relative to developmental delays is also experienced between pediatric clinics, education systems, and human services providers in many other areas of care and concern. Families will benefit from establishing set models and processes for collaboration across service systems. Providers within each service system “silo” express the need for more coordination with providers in other systems of care, but frequently encounter barriers to do so. Stronger linkages across systems of care would promote families access to care and reduce duplication of services.
SECTION III: CATALYST FOR CHANGE

A fundamental responsibility of First 5 San Francisco is to promote public interest and awareness of issues facing San Francisco’s young children and their families. We will work with partners and grantees to passionately declare that young children and their families matter. Closing the opportunity gap and pursuing equitable outcomes for all children are core tenets of our work. Based on this understanding, many of our goals and strategies take a bold stance in articulating how First 5 San Francisco will continue to be a thought leader and influential voice on behalf of children and their families. Many of these strategies continue existing work; while others represent new areas of opportunity to catalyze positive change.

Impact Areas: Goals, Outcomes and Strategies

The 2016-2021 Strategic Plan focuses on four interconnected areas for ongoing investment and effort which will have a combined positive impact on the success of all young children ages birth to five—and beyond—in San Francisco. These four Impact Areas are:

- Impact Area One: Systems Change
- Impact Area Two: Child Development / Early Care and Education
- Impact Area Three: Family Support
- Impact Area Four: Child Health

For each Impact Area, a goal has been identified along with specific desired outcomes that will assist in evaluating progress toward these goals.

Impact Area One: Systems Change

Approaching the system as a whole and knitting together the disparate pieces requires a coordinated change in systems of care that cuts across many areas. In addition to continuing to support current initiatives, First 5 San Francisco has both a need and ability to address overall systems change, and to work together with public and private partners to bring these changes about. The Systems Change Impact Area serves as an overarching frame that supports and extends the other three Impact Areas. Our funded collaborations with other funding partners and community stakeholders allow First 5 San Francisco to continue to work with children beyond their fifth year.

Goal: Organizations, communities, individuals and public agencies work together in new ways to advance the well-being of all children birth to eight and their families.

Outcomes:
- Attitudes and behaviors change to prioritize children and families.
- Practices change to improve services and supports for families and children.
- Policies change to strengthen and nurture children and their families.
Strategies:
1. Collaborate with and convene public and private partners to coordinate, streamline, and enhance systems of care.
2. Utilize and integrate data systems to enhance service delivery, share information, and increase system accountability for improved child outcomes.
3. Design and implement demonstration projects that close the opportunity gap for children, including both evidence-based, equity-driven and innovative approaches and solutions in the three Impact Areas below.
4. Share our experience and outcomes with regional, state and national level audiences.

Impact Area Two: Child Development / Early Care and Education
Early childhood care and education in support of healthy development and readiness for school has always been a central focus of First 5 San Francisco’s work. Our development of Preschool for All recognized that the full promise of a preschool experience depends on program quality. In partnership with the Office of Early Care and Education (OECE), First 5 San Francisco will shift its focus to quality assessment and improvement. Continued and expanded work with the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) can increase equity of opportunity, boost quality and facilitate system integration. This forms the basis for our Child Development / Early Care and Education goals and outcomes.

Goal: Early Care and Education (ECE) programs in San Francisco meet the highest standards of quality to ensure optimal child development and improved outcomes for all children.

Outcomes:
- All programs receiving City-funded ECE subsidies participate in QRIS.
- Providers demonstrate increased quality as defined by the QRIS.

Strategies:
1. Support ECE providers in identifying and removing barriers to ensure they can meet early learning standards as set by the QRIS for early care and education in San Francisco.
2. Manage the QRIS for early care and education in San Francisco; make innovations in response to evolving needs.
3. Collaborate and partner with the OECE, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and other stakeholders to further develop the City’s high quality early care and education system.
4. Leverage opportunities for common approaches for regional, state and national QRIS development.
**Impact Area Three: Family Support**

Parents and families are the primary influence on a young child’s healthy development. First 5 San Francisco’s partnership with other City departments has established Family Resource Centers (FRC) across the City for parents and other caregivers to connect with each other, build parenting skills and knowledge of child development and help to receive concrete supports in times of need or crisis. The funded FRCs have had measureable impacts on parenting practice and are increasingly recognized as an effective service delivery platform to reach parents and families. Deepening and sustaining the work of this initiative forms a strong foundation for our family support goals and outcomes.

**Goal:** Family support programs and systems improve families’ ability to support children’s life-long success.

**Outcomes:**
- Family resource system staff has skills and knowledge to deliver high quality service to children and families.
- Parents/caregivers use effective parenting practices as a child grows and develops.
- Families have knowledge and skills to navigate systems of care.

**Strategies:**
1. Develop a comprehensive system to review and support the quality of family support services and to build a highly skilled family support center workforce.
2. Invest in, sustain, and enhance FRCs in partnership with the Human Services Agency, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families and other stakeholders.
3. Support and engage families through innovative, new technologies.

**Impact Area Four: Child Health**

Human growth and development in the first five years is the most transformative than at any other time in the lifespan. Monitoring this progress assesses the achievement of developmental milestones of physical, socio-emotional and intellectual development. Early intervention with children at-risk of falling behind or with identified delays can lead lifelong favorable impacts. For parents and service providers, the systems of care for preventive and intervention health and developmental services can be difficult to access. Institutionalizing developmental screening and supports to access care will facilitate early identification and intervention services for children who could benefit from additional supports.

First 5 San Francisco’s leadership and advocacy can help improve and integrate the child health care system. We will work with partners and stakeholders to articulate gaps; to gather, interpret and communicate data; and to propose innovative solutions to help assemble the disparate puzzle pieces into a more unified system.
Goal: San Francisco establishes a system of universal early identification and intervention for children birth to five.

Outcomes:
- Families and providers know where to go for referrals and resources about developmental concerns and questions.
- All children are screened at regular intervals and assessed as needed.
- Developmental concerns and issues are identified and addressed prior to kindergarten.

Strategies:
1. Partner with the Department of Public Health, SFUSD and other stakeholders to make early child developmental health screenings universal and to link families with support services.
2. Strengthen and build linkages between the pediatric community, social services and education systems to increase families’ access and utilization of needed services.
3. Develop model(s) to coordinate and integrate services and supports that improve child health and well-being in multiple settings where children and families are present.

Next Steps for Implementation
The 2016-2021 goal statements, outcomes and strategies are just the beginning. The work of effectively implementing the strategies relies on more detailed, annual action planning and concomitant budget allocations. First 5 San Francisco staff will develop a comprehensive resource allocation plan and a detailed action plan for implementation. The action plan will include a schedule that accounts for phasing out old strategies and phasing in new strategies in a manner that allows many services and initiatives to continue uninterrupted.

In order to assess whether we are reaching or moving toward our stated goals, we will refine our evaluation framework, identifying specific indicators and measures of success for each desired outcome and strategy. First 5 San Francisco will also continue to complete annual accountability reports to First 5 California and the City/County of San Francisco.

Through honest reflection, bold vision, prudent planning, and careful, collaborative implementation, the positive impacts First 5 San Francisco hopes to realize for children and families will multiply--yielding a better future for us all.
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