



460 Kings County Drive Ste. 101 • Hanford • CA • 93230 • (559) 585-0814

Date of Meeting: December 3, 2024

2024-12-167

FY 2023/2024 Annual Report



460 Kings County Drive Ste. 101 • Hanford • CA • 93230 • (559) 585-0814

Date of Meeting:	December 3, 2024
Agenda Item Number:	2024-12-167
Agenda Item Type:	Action

AGENDA ITEM: 2023-2024 First 5 Kings County Annual Report

A. Background/History:

The California Children and Families First Act of 1998 requires that, “On or before October 15 of each year, each county commission shall conduct an audit of, and issue a written report on the implementation and performance of their respective functions during the preceding fiscal year, including at a minimum, the manner in which funds were expended, the progress toward, and the achievement of program goals and objectives, and the measurement of specific outcomes through appropriate reliable indicators”. Statute requires that the audit and report be transmitted to First 5 California and the State Controller’s Office by November 1st of each year, and that the reports be made available to the general public on request at no cost.

Due to the anticipated delay in receipt of the Final Audit Report, Staff sought and received an extension from the State Controller’s Office and First 5 California on October 24, 2024. Both State Agencies were advised that the next opportunity for the Commission to review the Audit was at the December 3, 2024 Commission meeting.

To that end, Commission Staff have prepared an annual report. This report is presented to the Commission today for discussion, review and approval of the annual report and adoption of the audit report.

B. Summary of Request, Description of Project and/or Primary Goals of Agenda Item:

Commission staff is requesting the Commission review, discuss, and adopt the Annual Report for the period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

C. Timeframe:

The Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 is before the Commission for final approval and adoption, and will be submitted to First 5 California and the State Controller’s Office, shortly after approval and adoption.

D. Costs:

There are no costs associated with this agenda item.

E. Staff Recommendation:

Commission staff is requesting the Commission review, discuss, and adopt the Annual Report for the period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

F. Attachments:

- First 5 Kings Dashboard
- DRAFT FY 2023-2024 Annual Report (AR1 – Revenue & Expenditure, AR2 – Demographic Worksheets, and AR3 – Evaluation Summary)



Children Served
974
From Population Totals entered on the AR2



Primary Caregivers Served
2,068
From Population Totals entered on the AR2

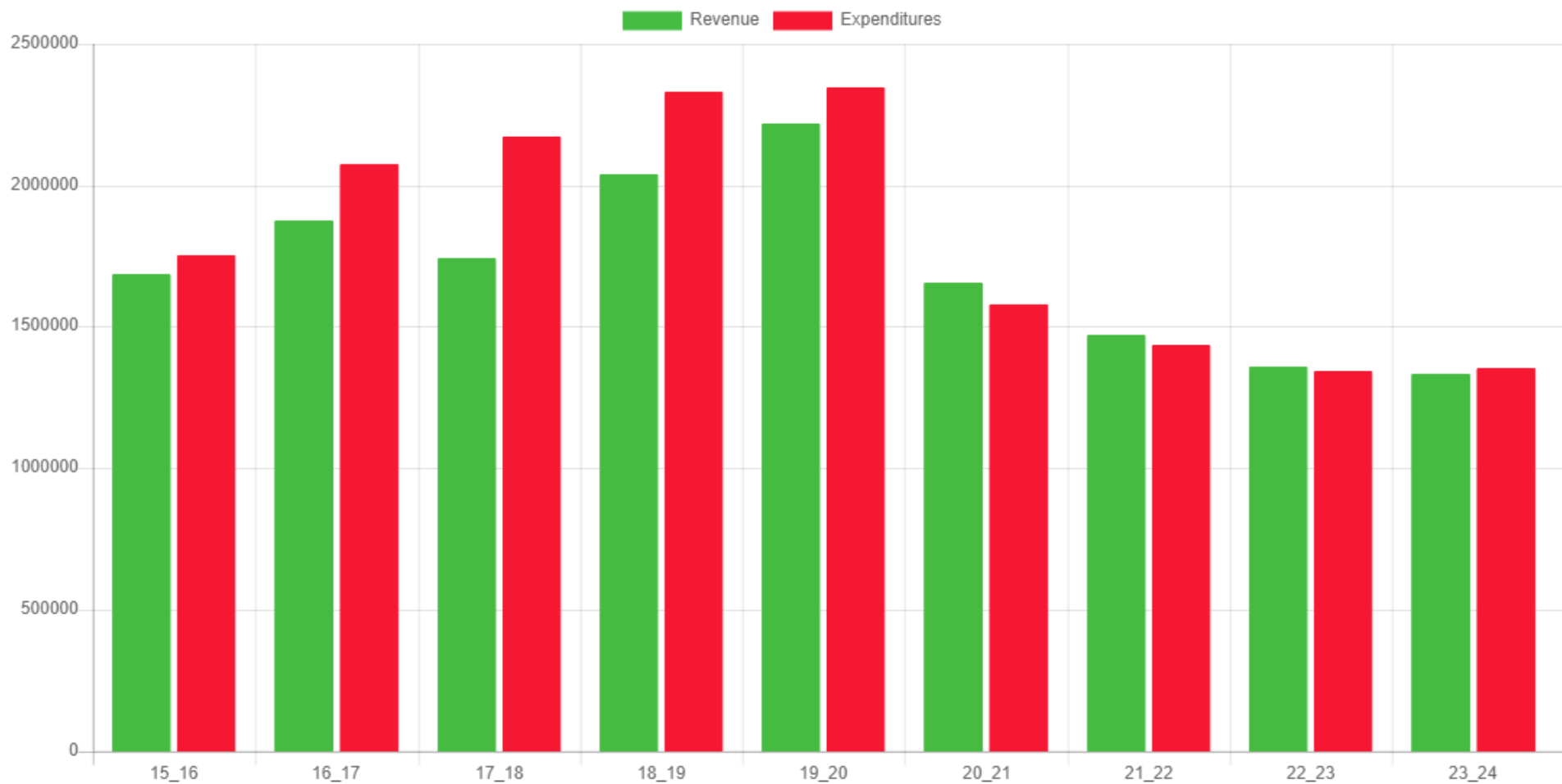


Revenue
\$1,370,993
Derived from entries on the AR1



Expenditures
\$1,357,141
Derived from entries on the AR1

Expenditures & Revenue Over Time ▾



Population Served ▼





Annual Report AR-1
Kings Revenue and Expenditure Summary
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

Revenue Detail

Category	Amount
Tobacco Tax Funds	\$1,280,252
IMPACT Legacy	\$0
Small Population County Augmentation Funds	\$0
Home Visiting Coordination Funds	\$0
Refugee Family Support Funds	\$0
Other First 5 California Funds	\$5,897
Other First 5 California Funds Description Regional HVC TA (\$5,897)	
Other Public Funds	\$23,758
Other Public Funds Description CalWORKs Home Visitation Program oversight (\$23,758)	
Donations	\$0
Revenue From Interest Earned	\$54,497
Grants	\$0
Grants Description	
Other Funds	\$6,589
Other Funds Outlawed Warrant (\$200), Vehicle Sale (\$6110), HVC TA Travel (\$279)	
Total Revenue	\$1,370,993

Improved Family Functioning

Service	Grantee	Program(s)	Children	Caregivers	Providers	Amount
General Family Support	CBO/Non-Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Operating Support Playgroups 	119	112	0	\$104,400
General Family Support	CBO/Non-Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Operating Support Five Protective Factors 	66	58	0	\$81,000
General Family Support	County Office of Education/School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Operating Support Five Protective Factors Playgroups 	364	311	0	\$382,511
Family Literacy and Book Programs	First 5 County Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kit for New Parents 	0	1218	0	\$0
Total						\$567,911

Improved Child Development

Service	Grantee	Program(s)	Children	Caregivers	Providers	Amount
Quality Early Learning and Care Supports	County Office of Education/School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Counts California 	0	0	204	\$81,317
Early Learning and Care Program Direct Costs	CBO/Non-Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility Grants 	235	197	0	\$314,820
Early Learning and Care Program Direct Costs	CBO/Non-Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility Grants 	133	108	49	\$81,000
Total						\$477,137

Improved Child Health

Service	Grantee	Program(s)	Children	Caregivers	Providers	Unique Families	Amount
General Health Education and Promotion	CBO/Non-Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Education 	0	30	10	0	\$3,000
Early Intervention	CBO/Non-Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Coordination and Linkage 	57	64	0	0	\$28,217
Total							\$31,217

Improved Systems Of Care

Service	Grantee	Program(s)	Amount
Systems Building	First 5 County Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not Applicable (Program Coordination/Salaries & Benefits/Operational Expenses) 	\$129,113
Total			\$129,113

Expenditure Details

Category	Amount
Program Expenditures	\$1,205,378
Administrative Expenditures	\$133,013
Evaluation Expenditures	\$18,750
Total Expenditures	\$1,357,141
Excess (Deficiency) Of Revenues Over (Under) Expenses	\$13,852

Other Financing Details

Category	Amount
Sale(s) of Capital Assets	\$0
Other	\$0
Total Other Financing Sources	\$0

Net Change in Fund Balance

Category	Amount
Fund Balance - Beginning	\$1,313,848
Fund Balance - Ending	\$1,327,700
Net Change In Fund Balance	\$13,852

Fiscal Year Fund Balance

Category	Amount
Nonspendable	\$0
Restricted	\$0
Committed	\$1,076,265
Assigned	\$0
Unassigned	\$251,435
Total Fund Balance	\$1,327,700

Expenditure Note

No data entered for this section as of 12/2/2024 4:05:55 PM.



Annual Report AR-2
Kings Demographic Worksheet
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

Population Served

Category	Number
Providers	253
Children Less than 3 Years Old	641
Children from 3rd to 6th Birthday	333
Primary Caregivers	2,068
Total Population Served	3,295

Primary Languages Spoken in the Home

Category	Number of Children	Number of Primary Caregivers
English	561	1,335
Spanish	407	620
Other - Specify with text box Tagalog; Portuguese; Bilingual	1	12
Unknown	5	101
Totals	974	2,068

Race/Ethnicity of Population Served

Category	Number of Children	Number of Primary Caregivers
Alaska Native/American Indian	4	2
Asian	19	44
Black/African-American	23	81
Hispanic/Latino	718	1,163
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	24
White	71	263
Two or more races	82	31
Unknown	55	460
Totals	974	2,068

Duplication Assessment

Category	Data
Degree of Duplication	30%
Confidence in Data	Somewhat confident
Additional Details (Optional)	There is no duplication within the data from the organizations we support; however, we do not have the capacity to compare the organizations with each other.



Annual Report AR-3

Kings County Evaluation Summary and Highlights

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

County Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Activities Completed, Findings, and Policy Impact

First 5 Kings County sub-contracts with an evaluation firm, Evaluation, Management, and Training Associates, Inc. (EMT), to evaluate its program investments and to support data system enhancements. The evaluation ensures compliance with state requirements, informs future planning and decision-making, and supports quality improvement efforts. The First 5 Kings County evaluation approach is guided by the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, which allocates public resources to fund community-based early childhood programs and services. The strategic plan contains a results matrix that identifies performance indicators for each initiative to measure the achievement of strategic results. Performance indicators are framed as targeted increases in service outputs from year-to-year as the basis for determining program success. Each year the evaluation team also includes a special focus on one or more strategic initiatives and conducts supplemental surveys of participants (e.g., parents or providers) to gauge their perceptions of service quality and outcomes. For 2023-2024, the ?????? program was chosen as the focus of additional data collection activities. The strategic plan acknowledges the declining trend in revenue and Commission funding that has occurred over time. This is due both to a newly enacted federal tobacco tax and to reductions in tobacco use statewide that affect the revenue base. The decline in funding, combined with escalating program costs, may require funded partners to reduce scale, limiting their capacity to achieve targeted increases. As the Commission continues to move forward in a climate of declining revenues, First 5 Kings County and its funded partners are continuing to concentrate on (1) building partner capacity to pursue new funding opportunities to supplement declining revenues, (2) adopt and implement evidence-based programs (EBPs) and practices with fidelity for parents and caregivers and young children, (3) increase visibility and coordination of First 5 and other early childhood and family services, and (4) strengthening data collection and reporting systems to demonstrate programmatic outcomes more effectively.

County Highlights

County Highlight

The Kings County Children and Families Commission continued to support local initiatives related to quality early childcare and education, parent education and support, children's health and systems integration and alignment. The local Family Resource Centers collectively served 549 children and 481 primary caregivers, ensuring that these families and children had access to a variety of services. Our local C.A.R.E.S. program provided professional development and training/technical assistance to the early care and education field through coaching and training to enhance the skills and knowledge of 204 providers. School readiness skills were delivered to 235 children and 186 parents/caregivers, and a new peer mentorship program for parents was launched reaching 108 parents/caregivers. A new program to educate 211 callers with young children about resources available in the community was launched in January 2024, resulting in 270 follow-up contacts and 177 follow-up calls to refer families to early childhood services. The Commission continues to support distribution of the New Parent Kits to parents with newborns, expanding from the local birthing center and Family Resource Centers, to the Tachi Yokut Santa Rosa Rancheria Tribe's Tribal Social Services department, Get Connected! program (through Kings 2-1-1), the Lemoore Naval Air Station's Fleet & Family Support Center and Kings County Public Health Department's Health Educator outreach team. Continued collaboration with Central Valley First 5s, to leverage resources and maximize program access, has resulted in the initiation of the following projects: the Heart of the Valley Collaborative for Home Visiting Technical Assistance, Central Valley Regional Help Me Grow, as well as exploring partnerships with the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans.



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Date of Meeting: December 3, 2024

FY 2023/2024 Annual Evaluation Report



460 Kings County Drive, Ste. 101 • Hanford • CA • 93230 • (559) 585-0814

Date of Meeting:
Agenda Item Type:

December 3, 2024
Informational

AGENDA ITEM: Approval of First 5 Kings County Evaluation Report

A. Background/History:

Proposition 10 requires all county commissions to “adopt an adequate and complete County Strategic Plan for the support and improvement of early childhood development within the county. The strategic plan must include a description of the goals and objectives proposed to be attained, a description of the programs, services, and projects proposed to be provided, sponsored or facilitated; and a description of how measurable results of such programs, services, and projects will be determined by the County Commission using appropriate and reliable indicators.”

A component of the first 5 Kings County Strategic Plan is an Evaluation Plan.

B. Summary of Request, Description of Project and/or Primary Goals of Agenda Item:

Commission staff requests the Commission review and discuss the Evaluation Report, providing direction for future implementation.

C. Timeframe:

The Evaluation Report reflects FY 2023/2024 and will serve as the baseline for the remainder of the current strategic plan.

D. Costs:

No new costs are associated with this item. The costs of the evaluation are incorporated into the annual First 5 budget.

E. Staff Recommendation:

Commission staff recommends the Commission review and provide feedback regarding the evaluation report.

F. Attachments:

- Powerpoint presentation on FY 2023/2024 Evaluation Report
- First 5 Kings County Evaluation Report for FY 2023/2024

First 5 Kings County Annual Evaluation

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Prepared for:

First 5 Kings County Children and
Families Commission
330 Campus Drive
Hanford, CA 93230



DECEMBER 2024



1

Evaluation Framework

- Guided by the 2020-25 Strategic Plan.
- Aligns with the four strategic results areas—improved child health, improved child development, improved family functioning, and improved systems of care.
- Monitors program **outputs** relative to performance targets (i.e., children and families reached, units of services delivered) and highlights key accomplishments and recommended areas for future focus.
- Outlines a role for the evaluation team to support data infrastructure development and system enhancements.



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Evaluation Scope of Work | 2023-2024

- Bimonthly planning and coordination meetings with First 5 leadership.
- Analysis of community archival data sources to profile needs among Kings County children, families, and communities.
- Review and analysis of First 5 quarterly and annual program reports.
- Analyses of databases maintained by funded partners, when available, to measure child and family service utilization.
- Support for 2025-2030 Strategic Planning process.
- In-kind collaboration to submit proposal to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) for Early Childhood Wraparound Services.



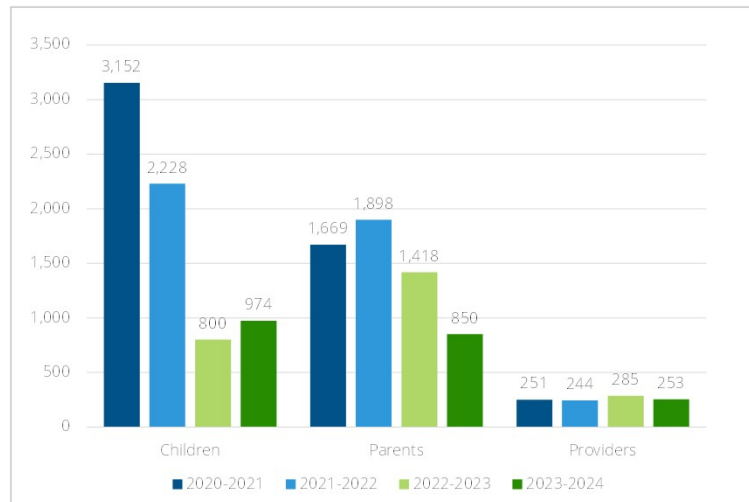
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Fiscal Year Overview

4

Program Reach | 2023-2024

- First 5 reached 974 children in FY 2023-24 or 7% of the 0 to 5 county population.
- Partners reached 850 parents and caregivers across funded initiatives.
- Additionally, 1,218 parents of newborns received New Parent Kits.
- Workforce development strategies reached 253 ECE providers to enhance early care and education quality.

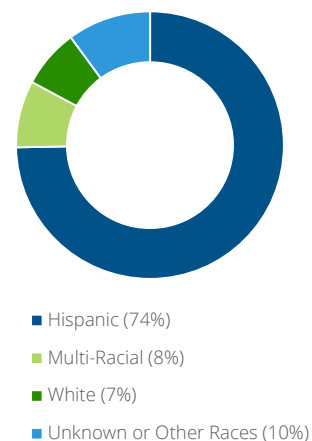


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Children Served | 2023-2024

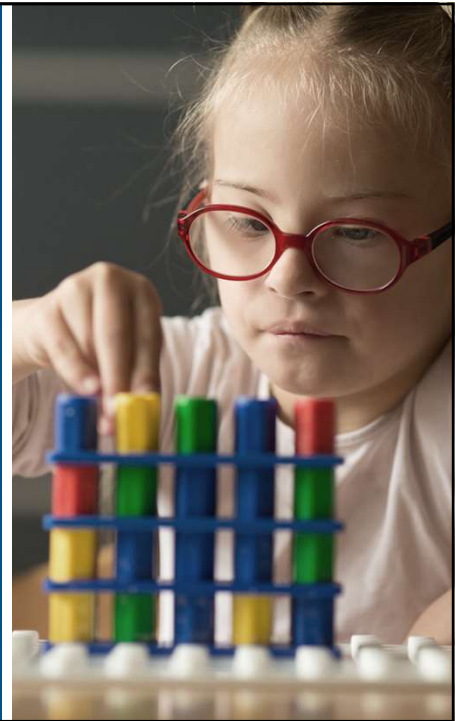
- Children reached through First 5 programs were representative of historically underserved groups.
- Seventy-four percent of children (74%) were Hispanic/Latino, 8% were Multi-Racial, 7% were White, and 10% were Other Races.
- Nearly half (45%) of children were from Spanish speaking households.
- Fourteen percent (14%) were designated as having special developmental needs.
- Two-thirds of children were infants and toddlers (66%) and one-third (34%) were preschool age. This represents a downward shift in average age from previous years.

Child Race/Ethnicity (n=974)



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School Readiness Initiative



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UCP Parent & Me and Special Needs | 2023-2024

- Commission allocated \$395,820 for United Cerebral Palsy of Central California (UCP) to promote school readiness and equitable access to quality early learning for children at-risk for developmental delays. The intent is to fill gaps in systems of care for children with mild to moderate delays who are ineligible for special developmental services.
- The Special Needs Project (SNP) reached 133 children in FY 2023-2024. All children (100%) were under 3 years when early intervention services are most effective.
- UCP staff screened 32 children with IDEA special needs, provided coaching to 49 ECE providers, and supported 7 special needs children in Parent & Me classrooms as part of its Early Start inclusion program, creating opportunities for interaction with typically developing children.
- Parent & Me programs delivered 1,149 interactive sessions, reaching 235 children and 186 parents or caregivers. Of the children served, 196 also receiving developmental screenings using the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP).
- New peer mentorship programs for parents were launched in FY 2023-2024 at the Hanford and Lemoore Parent & Me sites, reaching 108 parents and caregivers.
- Programs did encounter barriers related to staff turnover, site maintenance issues, and low program enrollments at the Kettleman City location.



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Early Care & Education (E3)



9

CARES | 2023-2024

- The First 5 Kings County Commission invested \$81,317 into workforce development strategies by supporting an ECE consultant with the Kings County Office of Education (KCOE). The consultant supports the Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) program.
- CARES service populations include 204 ECE providers (unduplicated) from licensed childcare centers and preschools, home visitation programs, Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers, and Family Resource Center staff.
- CARES used funds to provide direct technical assistance services including reviews of personal growth plans, assistance with permit applications and higher education access, and provision of training, coaching and mentoring.
- The program also provided resource assistance to 392 providers including classroom assessment implementation materials, check-out materials, and computer access.
- KCOE offered professional growth training and materials to support 216 providers in response to needs identified through quality improvement assessments. Staff also provided coaching to 121 Family Child Care (FCC) providers and provided stipends and other materials to 4,054 participants (duplicative).

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Family Resource Centers (FRC) Initiative



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Family Resource Centers | 2023-2024

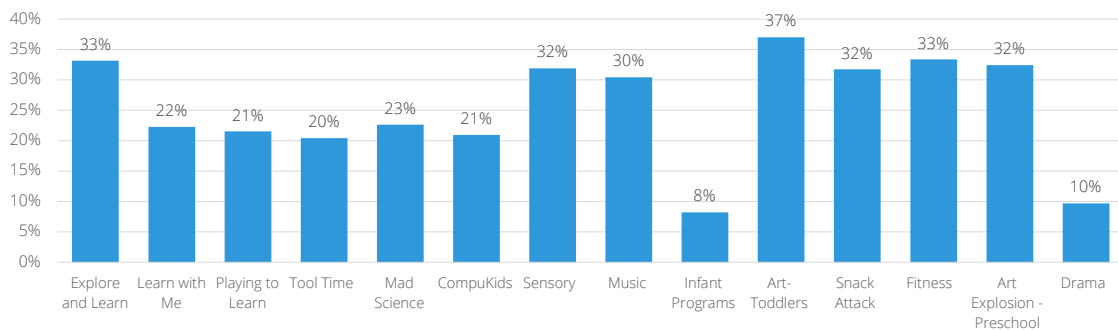
- FRCs operated across four Kings County communities in FY 2023-24 and reached 549 children and 481 parents and caregivers. The four centers continued to offer an array of school readiness and family support services to underserved children and families.
- Onsite resources available to families included translation assistance, book giveaways, incentive closets, and access to office facilities (e.g., fax, phone, copier, computer).
- Services for parents and caregivers were delivered directly by FRC staff and through partnerships with collaborating agencies, including La Leche League, Kingsview Behavioral Health, Cal Viva, Cal Fresh, and SNAP ED.
- Families were also referred to community-based services including preschool and childcare spaces, employment assistance, education and GED programs, food distribution, legal services, medical services, WIC, and special education. Twenty-eight percent of all parents and 19% of all children received at least one referral.
- The FRC initiative also supported home visitation services for 9 families through the Kettleman City FRC using the Parents as Teachers (PATs) evidence-based curriculum.

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Family Resource Centers | 2023-2024

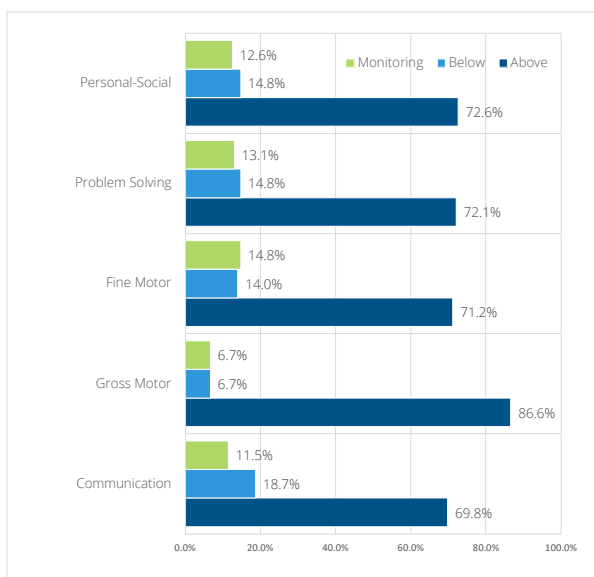
- Early childhood programming featured classes for infants and caregivers, toddlers, and preschool-age children. Topics included, but were not limited to art, music, cooking and nutrition, movement, storytelling, and sensory exploration. FRCs also sponsored family literacy activities and socialization events.

Percent of All Children Accessing Programs by Activity Type (n=549)



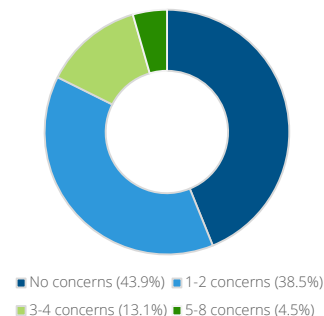
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Developmental Screenings | 2023-2024



- FRCs conducted 358 developmental screenings with families to help educate parents about their children's development and identify children with suspected delays.

Overall Concerns among Children Screened (n=358)



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KUW 'Get Connected' | 2023-2024

- The Commission invested \$36,000 to support the new Kings United Way (KUW) 'Get Connected' screening, outreach, and referral program for families with young children. The new program was launched in January 2024.
- Call specialists screened 850 calls to determine the presence of a child 0 to 5 in each caller's household. Fourteen percent of households (14%) were confirmed to have young children.
- On follow-up contact, 270 calls resulted in referrals to community services to help families meet basic needs.
- Of those, 177 follow-up calls resulted in referrals to early childhood services, such as Family Resource Centers.
- Leading requests for assistance among families with young children included housing assistance, utilities assistance, food distribution, and diapers.
- The program faced initial challenges related to implementation of new protocols that were resolved by the second quarter.



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Challenges and Opportunities

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Funding Environment

Declining Tobacco Tax Revenue Base

Funded partners continued to operate in the face of steadily declining revenues prompting providers to scale-back operations or rethink service delivery approaches. This continuing trend places pressure on First 5 Kings County staff and its funded partners to identify new funding opportunities. It also requires First 5 staff to assume a proactive leadership role in helping build professional capacity of its partner agencies to seek and obtain new funding (e.g., identifying funding opportunities, supporting proposal development, fiscal management).

Availability of New Funding to Fill Gaps in Systems of Care

In the face of declining revenue, the First 5 Kings County Program Manager in partnership with the evaluation consultant pursued a new funding opportunity under the California Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS), California Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) to fund Early Childhood Wraparound Services. The proposal, awarded in October 2024, will infuse more than \$1 million in new funding over a two-year period to expand home visitation services and support the creation of a new Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) program to build provider capacity to work with children with special behavioral health needs.

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Changing ECE Landscape

Expansion of Transition Kindergarten (TK)

As part of a broader effort to improve early childhood education across California, the state recently enacted a new law to expand access to transitional kindergarten within K-12 education systems. In 2022-2023 California began offering TK programs to four-year old children with increasing eligibility based on age. TK programs within Kings County enrolled 716 children in 2022-2023. These changes aim to provide early education opportunities for all children with a focus on equity and improving school readiness.

Adapting and Aligning

The expansion of TK programs creates opportunities and challenges for existing early education systems and providers, who now face increased competition for the same pool of children, as more families opt for no cost TK programs through their public schools.

While changes promise to broaden access to early education, they also require both existing preschool and K-12 systems to adapt programming to be developmentally-appropriate for a younger population. This shift may prompt increased needs for professional development and for increased collaboration and alignment between existing preschool programs and K-12 systems to ensure smooth transitions for children.

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Data Infrastructure

Limited Data Infrastructure

First 5 California requires local First 5 commissions to collect, analyze, and report evaluation data annually to the state to ensure performance monitoring and accountability. This includes tracking unduplicated participants across funded partners for accurate accounting of program reach.

First 5 Kings County's data infrastructure and technology have lagged behind and fail to capture data from all funded partners, limiting capacity for more robust evaluation of programs and services.

Data System Enhancements

The AccuSQL database used by FRCs to record program attendance will be phased out in January 2025 and replaced with a new cloud-based platform, Accudemia. First 5 is supporting a 4-month trial period to test out the updated platform with all grantees to capture deliverables for First 5 contracts. The platform will allow First 5 and the evaluation team to report on unduplicated individuals served across programs and activities for the first time and to conduct more comprehensive analyses of child and family participation and outcomes.

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Program Structure and Quality

Curricula and Program Structure

Most Commission-funded early childhood education programs (FRCs and Parent & Me classes) did not integrate evidence-based models and were not standardized across programs. Instead, providers relied on program staff to custom-design class curricula based on knowledge of early childhood development practices. Disadvantages of this approach include lack of consistency across teachers and centers, time and cost burden on staff, and lack of clarity around intended outcomes that make it more difficult to evaluate fidelity and program effectiveness. However, the voluntary, drop-in nature of most programs may make use of EBPs more challenging.

Integrating EBPs

Partners should explore ways to integrate EBPs and model curricula into existing services. Use of EBPs ensures that knowledge and research findings of professional experts guide programming, and that program strategies are proven effective for achieving positive outcomes for children and families. Standardized programming with clearly defined goals, expectations for participation, and results allow for improved measurement of fidelity and child and family outcomes (e.g., school readiness, increased parenting knowledge and resilience, improved access to services following referral). New initiatives planned for the upcoming fiscal year (e.g., Help Me Grow, Imagination Library) may offer new opportunities for EBP program implementation.

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Capacity to Assess Return on Investment

Limits of Output Measurement

The evaluation approach for First 5 Kings County is guided by the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, which establishes a results matrix and performance indicators for each initiative. Indicators used to track progress toward strategic outcomes measure service outputs, with success defined as increases in participants served or services delivered.

With declining tax revenues, it becomes more critical than ever to build capacity for assessing return on investment, defined by meaningful outcomes for children and families. This requires clarifying program objectives, embedding stronger measurement and accountability requirements into contracts, and supporting funded partners with a robust data infrastructure for reporting.

Refining Performance Measurement Systems

The new Strategic Plan creates opportunities to clarify program goals and outcomes and redefine performance targets and benchmarks in ways that support increased program accountability and facilitate quality improvement. A more outcome-focused measurement approach, supported by evidence-based program implementation, enhanced data infrastructure, and stronger measurement and reporting requirements, could promise more meaningful analyses of program data to better assess return on investment and guide future funding decisions.

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Next Steps for 2024-2025

Support for Strategic Plan Development



The First 5 Kings County Program Manager and evaluation consultant continue to make progress on the development of a new Strategic Plan. Specific activities completed to date include:

- Preliminary plan development and coordination outlining key tasks and timelines.
- Compilation of need indicators from archival data sources.
- Design of a countywide parent and caregiver survey to identify unmet service needs to be launched in early December 2024.
- Completion of semi-structured key informant interviews with seven stakeholder organizations to date representing the Kings County early childhood system of care.

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Questions & Discussion

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First 5 Kings County Annual Evaluation Report

2023-24

EMT ASSOCIATES, INC.

Introduction

The California Children and Families First Act, or Proposition 10, was passed by voters in 1998, introducing a 50-cent retail sales tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products in the state. The revenue generated supports early learning, health, and family development programs for children aged 0-5. The act also created the First 5 California state commission, along with local commissions in all 58 counties, to manage the allocation of funds, ensure tax dollars are directed toward early childhood initiatives, and monitor program accountability.

First 5 Kings County envisions a community where “all Kings County families have access to the tools, knowledge, and quality care needed to help every child reach their fullest potential.” To achieve this vision, First 5 Kings County allocates resources to community partners who deliver direct services to children and families, invest in workforce development, and strengthen early childhood care systems.

First 5 Kings County engages in strategic planning every five years to assess local community needs and to direct Commission investments to priority areas. The Strategic Plan outlines the Commission’s strategic focus, implementation approach, financial plans, and evaluation methods for ensuring program accountability and best practices. The five-year plan is guided by a state framework that targets outcomes in the following four strategic result areas:

- Improved Child Health
- Improved Child Development
- Improved Family Functioning
- Improved Systems



First 5 Kings County 2023-2024 Investments

The First 5 Kings County 2020-2025 strategic plan guides the achievement of results through four core initiatives described in more detail below. These include the School Readiness, Family Resource Center (FRC), Early Care and Education (E3), and Innovation Initiatives.

● School Readiness Initiative

The School Readiness Initiative helps prepare children for entry into kindergarten. As part of its school readiness strategy, the Commission allocated \$395,820 in FY 2023-24 to support two programs for children at risk for developmental concerns. Funded programs include the Parent & Me and Special Needs Projects offered through United Cerebral Palsy of Central California (UCP).

● Family Resource Center (FRC) Initiative

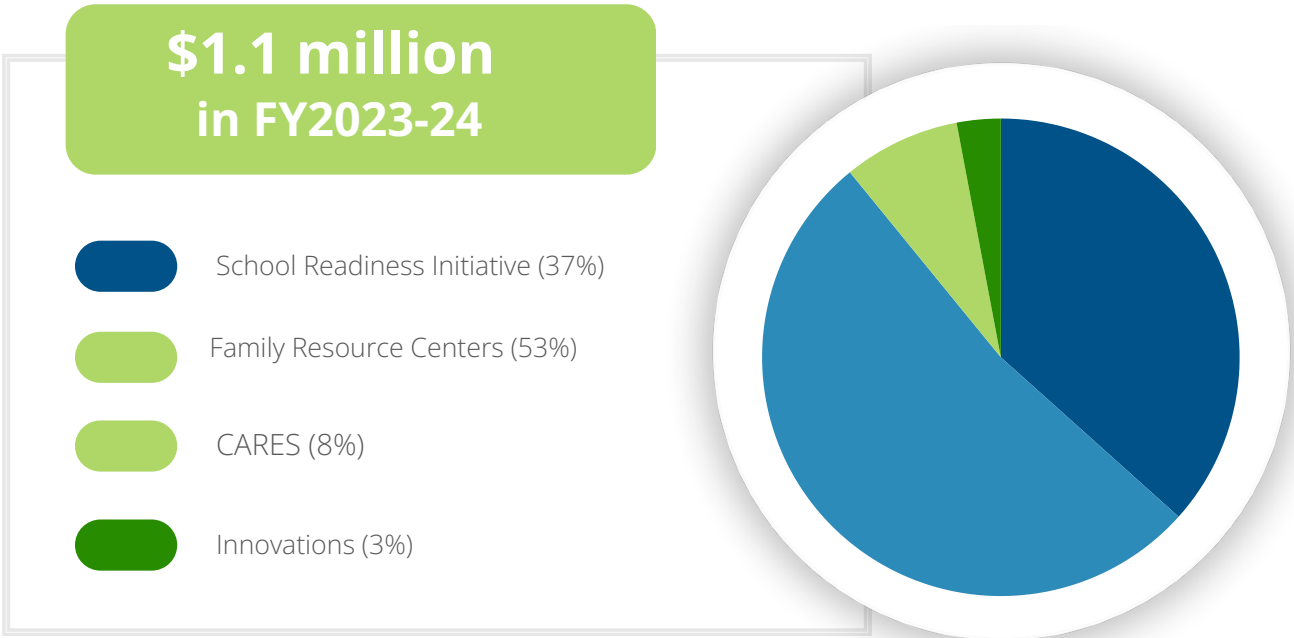
The FRC Initiative funds place-based community centers that serve as a single access point to early childhood education, health, and family services, resources, and supports. The Commission awarded \$567,911 in funding to three funded partner agencies in FY 2023-24 to support four FRCs across the communities of Corcoran, Hanford, Kettleman City, and Lemoore.

● Early Care and Education (E3) Initiative

The E3 Initiative promotes workforce development to increase the quality of center-based preschools, family day care centers, and home visiting programs. The E3 Initiative was allocated \$81,317 in FY 2023-24 to support components of the Kings County Office of Education's Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Academic Standards (CARES) program. Funds are used to provide coaching, technical assistance, and training services for early childhood education (ECE) providers.

● Innovations Initiative

The Innovations Initiative invests in new or innovative strategies that benefit children, families, and systems of care. For FY 2023-24, the Commission directed \$36,000 in funding to Kings United Way (KUW) to launch its new 'Get Connected' community outreach and referral program for families with young children.



Evaluation Approach

First 5 California requires local First 5 commissions to collect, analyze, and report evaluation data annually to the state to ensure effective performance monitoring and accountability. To assess outcomes, the 2020-2025 First 5 Kings County Strategic Plan established a results matrix and performance indicators for each of its four funded initiatives. First 5 Kings County subcontracted with an external evaluation firm, EMT Associates, Inc., to design an evaluation approach based on the results matrix and performance indicators that are defined for each initiative and operationalized in subcontract agreements with funded partners. This approach aims to ensure compliance with state requirements, inform future planning and decision-making, and promote continuous quality monitoring.

Data Limitations

The evaluation approach for First 5 Kings County is guided by the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, which directs public funds to support community-based early childhood programs and services. The plan includes the results matrix and performance indicators for each initiative that are designed to track progress toward strategic outcomes. These indicators are defined by targeted annual increases in service outputs, which serve as measures of program success.

The strategic plan also acknowledges a decline in revenue and Commission funding, driven by the introduction of a federal tobacco tax and a statewide reduction in tobacco use, both of which have impacted the revenue base. This decrease in funding, coupled with rising program costs, may require funded partners to scale back their operations, potentially limiting their ability to meet the targeted service increases.

Another key limitation of the evaluation approach is that the counts of children, parents, and providers reached through First 5 Kings County funded programs are duplicative. The California Children and Families Commission requires counties to track unduplicated participants across multiple funded partners to provide a more accurate representation of program reach. However, due to limited data system capacity, funded partners can only track individual participants within their programs and cannot account for duplicate enrollments across multiple partners or activities. As a result, the reported number of children and families served may be inflated. For this same reason, the evaluation does not fully capture the systems integration goals outlined in the five-year strategic plan.



Structure of the Report

The next sections of the report profile the characteristics of families with young children who live in Kings County and details child and family participation in First 5 funded programs and services delivered during the 2023-24 fiscal year. The report also presents a data snapshot for each of the core funded programs and initiatives, reporting on program reach and service utilization.

The report concludes with a section focusing on challenges and opportunities moving forward that have been identified through analyses of secondary data sources and interviews with funded partners.

Kings County Children and Families

Kings County is located in California's Central Valley bordered by the larger counties of Monterey, Fresno, Kern, and Tulare. There are currently 152,627 residents living in Kings County (CA Department of Finance, 2024). Eighty percent of the population is concentrated in one of four incorporated cities of Avenal (9%), Corcoran (14%), Hanford (39%), or Lemoore (18%) and 20% lives in unincorporated areas, including the small communities of Armona, Home Garden, Kettleman City, Stratford, and the Lemoore Naval Air Station. The county area also encompasses the Santa Rosa Rancheria of the Tachi Yokut Tribe near Lemoore. Approximately 12% of the Kings County population is designated as rural (U.S. Census, 2020).

Based on current population projections (CA Department of Finance, 2023), there are approximately 13,968 Kings County children 0 to 5 years old, including 2,206 infants (16%), 4,585 toddlers (33%), and 7,177 children of preschool or kindergarten age (51%). The U.S. Census indicates that 3,863 family households in Kings County have a child under the age of 6 with an average family size of 3.81 people per household. Forty-eight percent of children live in married family households, 47% live in female-headed, single-parent households, and 5% live in male-headed, single-parent households. An estimated 1,639 children under age 6 live in households headed by a grandparent.

The Kings County population is culturally and linguistically diverse. Forty-nine percent of children identify as White, 5% as Black, 2% as Asian, 22% as another race, and 20% as multiracial. Based on ethnicity, 68% of children in the county are of Hispanic or Latino descent. Approximately 40% of Kings County residents speak a language other than English at home, with Spanish being the most common language spoken.

Kings County family households often face serious economic hardship. About 23 percent of all county children live below poverty and nearly a quarter (22%) of the adult population never graduated from high school. Twenty percent of children live in food insecure households and 3% of public school-age children recently experienced homelessness. Income disparities affect Hispanic or Latino residents of any race (22%) who are twice as likely as White, non-Hispanic residents (12%) to live at or below poverty.

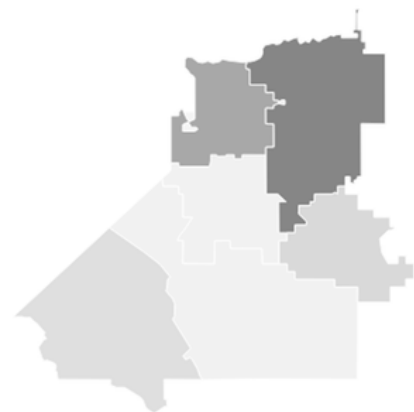
Needs Among New Parents and Families

Data available through the recent 2019-2021 CA Maternal and Infant Health Assessment (MIHA) survey profiles the characteristics of Kings County mothers with newborn infants revealing unmet needs within this population. Survey results show that more than 40% of new mothers live at or below poverty and nearly a quarter (22%) experienced food insecurity. Housing instability was also a challenge facing many new Kings County families. Eight percent experienced homelessness during pregnancy and another 4.8% moved due to problems paying rent or a mortgage.



Twenty-one percent of new mothers were born outside of the U.S. and 14% spoke Spanish as the primary language at home. Similar to patterns in the general population, Hispanic mothers (19%) were far more likely than non-Hispanics (7%) to be uninsured or to experience gaps in coverage, creating additional barriers to accessing needed health care.

Data from Kings County reveal that many mothers of newborns also face trauma or personal hardships during pregnancy, including challenges such as divorce or separation (9%), job loss (14%), intimate partner violence (8%), and postpartum depressive symptoms (14%). These forms of parenting stress can contribute to child maltreatment. According to the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, in 2022, 134 children ages 0-5 in Kings County had a substantiated report of child abuse, and 106 children in this age group were placed in foster care. Adult residents in family households with children also report high rates of exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), with 20% of the population affected. ACEs are linked to negative physical and behavioral health outcomes.



Kings County Children and Families (cont.)

Early Care and Education Landscape

Families with young children in Kings County also face challenges accessing quality early learning opportunities to provide needed childcare and to support their children’s early learning and development. Historically, within Kings County, the demand for childcare has consistently outpaced the available supply, creating a significant gap in access to quality care. According to recent data from the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, the county has 201 licensed childcare facilities, including 39 center-based providers and 162 family childcare homes. These licensed facilities offer 3,326 childcare spaces countywide. However, 81% of working families still lack access to affordable, licensed childcare. This data underscores the challenges faced by young children and families in Kings County and highlights the critical need for early childhood services to ensure that all children and families can thrive.

Issues related to child care access are being addressed, in part, through recent changes to California state law regarding universal preschool that have expanded access to transitional kindergarten (TK). Starting in the 2022-2023 school year, California began offering transitional kindergarten to all 4-year-olds, gradually increasing eligibility based on age. TK programs enrolled 716 children across Kings County school districts in 2022-2023. By 2025, all 4-year-olds will be eligible for TK, regardless of their birthdate. Additionally, the state has made efforts to integrate TK into the K-12 education system, ensuring that it is a high-quality, accessible option for families. These changes aim to provide early education opportunities for all children, with a focus on equity and improving school readiness across the state.

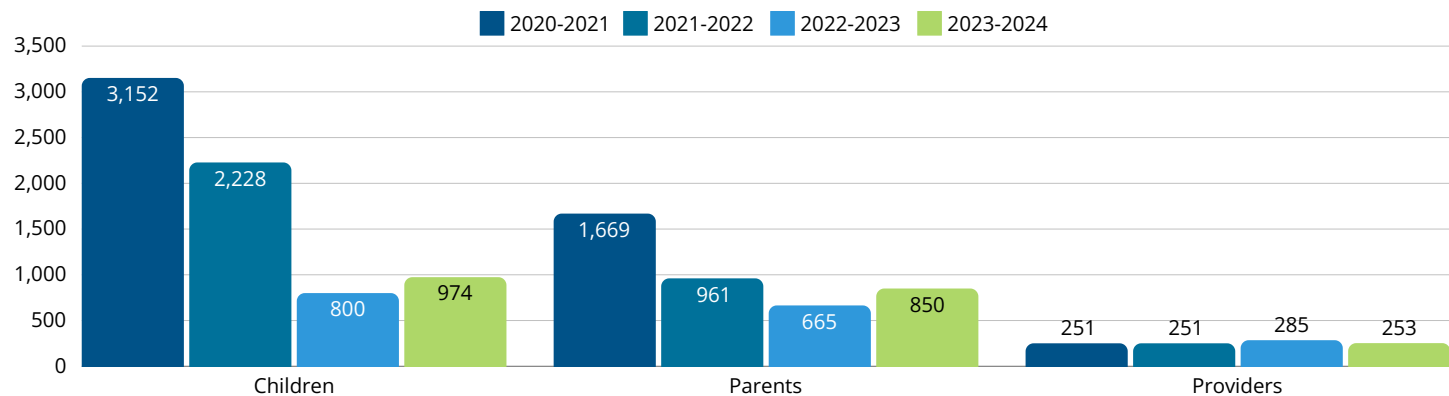
First 5 Kings County Service Reach

In 2023-24 First 5 Kings County invested in an array of direct services for children, caregivers, and providers to promote access to early care and education, workforce development, school readiness, and family support services benefitting young children and their families. Direct service programs funded under the School Readiness and Family Resource Center initiatives delivered health, early education, and family support services to an estimated 974 children, about 56% of whom were infants and toddlers and 44% of whom were preschool or kindergarten age. This number accounts for about 7% of the 13,968 children 5 years of age and under countywide.

The racial and ethnic composition within the child service population included a mix of Hispanic or Latino (74%), Multiracial (8%), and White (7%) children, and children of other or unknown races or ethnic groups (10%). Hispanic or Latino children were slightly overrepresented relative to the larger child population countywide and White children were slightly underrepresented. Almost half of all children served (45%) spoke Spanish as the primary language spoken at home.

In FY 2023-24, First 5 Kings County funded partners reached 850 parents, caregivers, and other family members. These individuals participated in a variety of community programs and services, including parent education, parent-child interactive programs, and other coordinated offerings through family resource centers. Additionally, 1,218 parents of newborns received New Parent Kits at their hospitals. First 5 Kings County also supported 253 members of the early childhood education (ECE) workforce with coaching and professional development opportunities designed to improve the quality of ECE settings and enhance provider effectiveness in working with children with special needs.

Children, Parents and Caregivers, and Providers Reached - Annual Trends



School Readiness Initiative

Funded Programs

One the largest initiatives supported by First 5 is the School Readiness initiative, which funds two early childhood education programs for children with special developmental needs. These programs, implemented by United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Central California, serve children with known disabilities, health, or mental conditions who require specialized services, as well as children with suspected delays who may need additional support or monitoring. The UCP programs are designed to promote equitable access to quality early learning opportunities for all children by addressing gaps in the system of care for those with mild to moderate delays who do not qualify for other special developmental services.

Services for Children with Special Needs

UCP received \$81,000 in funding to support the Special Needs Project in FY2023-24. Special needs children are those with or without identified disabilities, health, or mental health conditions requiring specialized services, supports, or monitoring. The project offers classroom-based coaching to ECE providers and provides screening, intervention, and follow-up for children with developmental delays. The project provided interventions to 133 children in 2023-24 all of whom were 0–3 years of age. UCP staff also provided coaching to 49 ECE providers and supported 7 special needs children in Parent & Me classrooms as part of an inclusion program with Early Start.

Parent & Me Interactive Programs

UCP also received \$314,820 in funding to implement community-based Parent & Me early education programs that reached 235 children and 186 parents and caregivers in FY 2023-24. Parent & Me sites offered 1,149 interactive, parent education and support sessions to children and families across five program locations. Due to challenges related to staff turnover and maintenance issues at certain program sites, fewer classroom sessions were implemented than planned. UCP staff also conducted developmental screenings with 196 children using the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP). Children 0 to <3 years were screened at 6 month intervals and children 3 to 5 years of age were screened annually.

Parent Mentoring

UCP added a new component to its Parent & Me programming by hosting parent mentorship groups that offer peer support and education to families at Parent & Me sites. This new component is funded through the Special Needs project and reached 108 unduplicated parents in FY 2023-24.

Parent & Me Sessions Implemented by Program Location (n=1,149)



- Hanford (32%)
- Corcoran (31%)
- Lemoore (16%)
- Avenal (16%)
- Kettleman City (5%)



Kings United Way (KUW) “Get Connected”

Funded Programs

Under its Innovations Initiative, the First 5 Kings County Commission awarded \$36,000 in funding to Kings United Way (KUW) to support the new ‘Get Connected’ outreach and referral program for families with young children 0 to 5 years of age. The program supports the integration of a new screening protocol for all callers who contact the Kings County 211 information line to determine whether there is a child 0 to 5 years in their household.

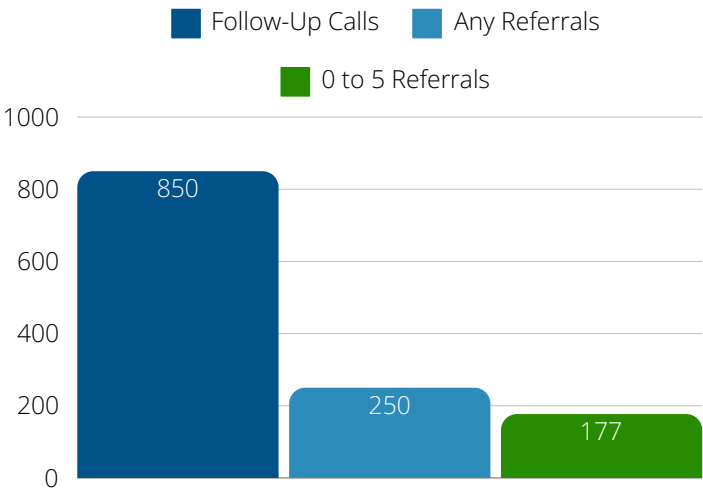
When conducting follow-up calls, the call specialist will confirm that the family received services that were requested during the initial 211 call and will determine if additional community resource information is needed. This includes referrals and linkages to services that specifically cater to children 0-5 years, with an emphasis on Family Resource Centers and other programs that support children’s development, health, and family well-being.

Community Outreach and Service Linkages

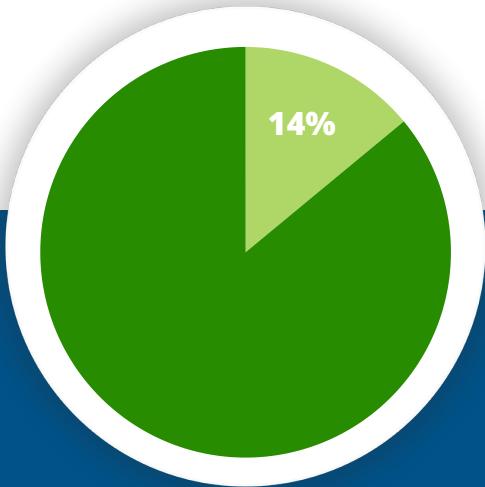
KUW introduced the new screening protocol in January 2024. Fourteen percent of families screened (14%) who contacted Kings 211 had a child 0 to 5 in the home. In a six-month period:

- 850 calls were screened by call specialists to determine the presence of a young child in the household.
- 270 follow-up calls resulted in referrals to community services to meet basic needs.
- 177 follow-up calls resulted in referrals to services for children 0 to 5 years of age.

Follow-Up Calls and Referrals for Households with Children 0 to 5



Percentage of 211 Callers Who Have a Child 0 to 5 in the Household



Leading Requests for Assistance Among Families with Young Children

- Housing assistance
- Utilities assistance
- Food distribution
- Diapers

Family Resource Centers (FRCs)

Funded Programs

Kings County supports four Family Resource Centers (FRCs) located in Hanford, Corcoran, Lemoore, and Kettleman City. These centers serve as community hubs, offering a comprehensive range of health, early childhood, and parenting support services to children aged 0 to 5 and their families. The main goal of the FRCs is to enhance children's school readiness and provide quality early learning experiences, particularly for those who may not have access to formal preschool programs.

The Commission invested \$567,911 in funding allocated across three implementing organizations in 2023-24. FRCs vary in overall size and scope, budgets, and service offerings. The two largest FRCs serve the communities of Hanford and Lemoore followed by Corcoran and Kettleman City. FRCs served 549 children and 481 parents and caregivers annually across the four community sites.

Early Education Programs

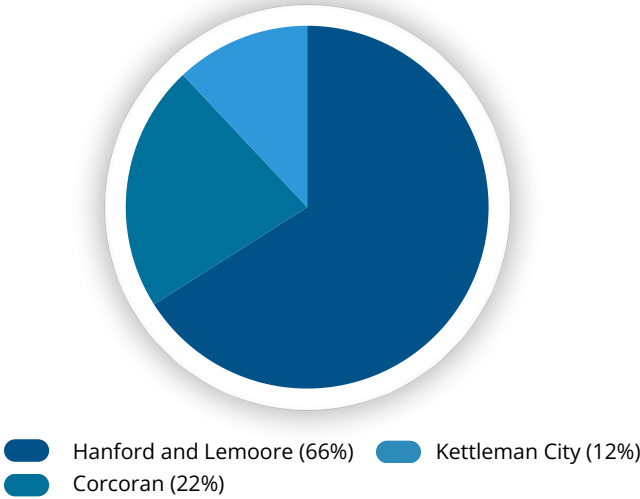
Of the 549 children reached through FRCs countywide, about 54% were infants and toddlers (0-3), and 46% were preschool or kindergarten age. This reflects a shift in age with proportionately more infants and toddlers than in previous years. FRC staff attributed this change to the movement of preschool-age children into transitional kindergarten programs. This shift will require FRCs to adapt their program offerings to include more classes that are developmentally-appropriate for younger children.

Early childhood programming in FY 2023-2024 featured interactive classes for children and their parents or caregivers focusing on art, music, cooking and nutrition, movement, storytelling, and sensory exploration. Early education curricula are developed by FRC teachers and staff at each center incorporating best practices identified through training and professional development opportunities.

The most widely accessed early childhood education and enrichment classes for children or for children and parents together (percent attending) included:

- 37% Art and Finger Painting (Toddlers)
- 33% Explore and Learn (Toddlers)
- 33% Exercise and Fitness (Preschool)
- 32% Smart Art/Art Explosion (Preschool), Snack Attack, and My 5 Senses (Toddlers)
- 30% Sing & Play (Toddlers)

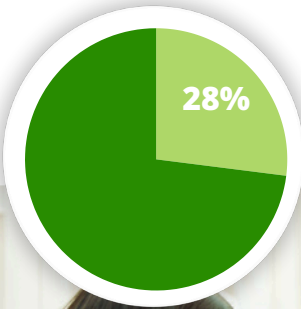
Children Served by Program Site (n=549)



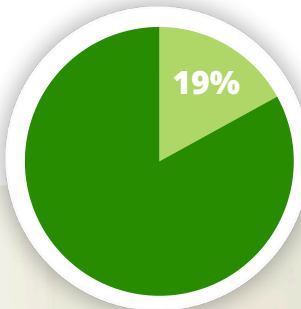
Resource and Referral

FRCs also address family needs by providing basic needs assistance, such as emergency food and clothing, and other resources available on site, such as translation assistance, book giveaways, incentive closets, and access to office facilities (e.g., fax, phone, copier, computer). Families are also referred to community-based services including preschool and childcare spaces, employment assistance, utilities assistance, legal services, medical services, WIC and special education. More than a quarter of all parents (28%) and 19% of all children were referred to at least one community-based service in FY 2023-2024.

Percent of Parents Referred (n=133)



Percent of Children Referred (n=106)



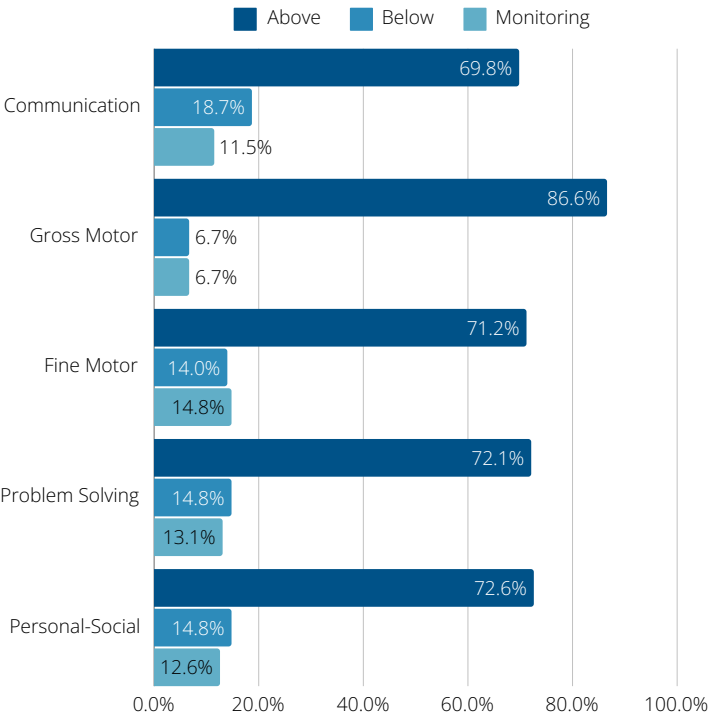
FRC Initiative (continued)

Developmental Screenings

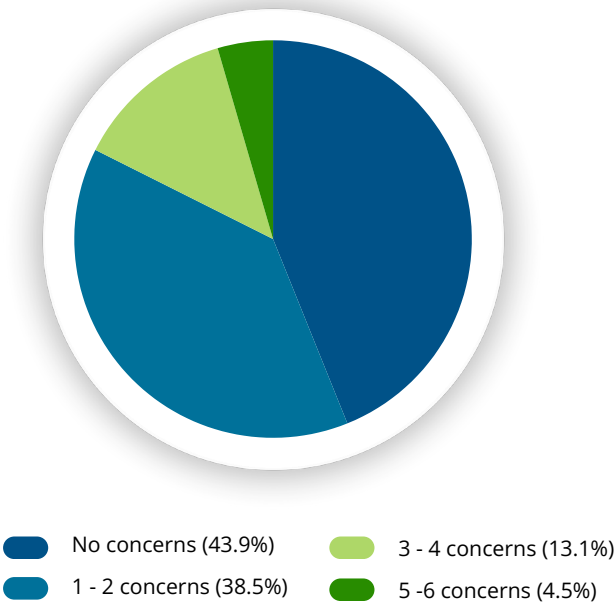
First 5 Kings County aims to increase the number of children who receive developmental screenings. There is specific focus on maximizing the number of children screened prior to their 3rd birthday, which is the optimal age for delivering early intervention services to remediate developmental delays. Funded partners screen children using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screening tool. For the current fiscal year, funded partners completed 358 screenings. This included 113 screenings conducted through the Hanford Family Connection, 109 screenings conducted through the Lemoore Family Connection, and 136 screenings conducted through the Kettleman City FRC. Eighty-seven percent of children (87%) were screened using the English language version of the ASQ and 13% were screened in Spanish.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of children screened were under the age of 3 and more than half of those screened (56%) were identified with at least one area of concern, indicating a potential delay. The percentage of children identified with suspected delays was highest on measures of communication (18.7%), problem solving (14.8%), and personal-social skills (14.8%). Once a suspected delay was identified, children were referred to appropriate services in their communities for further assessment.

Results of ASQ Developmental Screenings (n=358)



Results of ASQ Developmental Screenings - Concerns Identified (n=358)



Home Visitation

Kettleman City FRC received funding to support a home educator who offers prenatal and postnatal home visits to families in the Kettleman City service area. The program serves expectant parents and families with young children 0-2 years of age and uses the Parents as Teachers (PAT) evidence-based curriculum. In FY2023-24, the Kettleman City home visiting program reached 9 parents and 8 children delivering 135 units of services for parents and caregivers and 111 units of services for children. The program includes additional components including Parent Cafes and family socialization events. Home educators also delivered Raising a Reader bags and educational activity packets to 12 children as an evidence-based strategy to promote early literacy development.

Coordinated Services

FRCs also offered educational and support services for parents and other caregivers that were co-located at FRC locations and coordinated through partnerships with other community-based providers and agencies. Collaborating agencies that partnered with FRCs this fiscal year, included Cal Fresh, Cal Viva, Kings County Action Organization (KCAO), Kingsview Behavioral Health, La Leche League, and SNAP ED.

Early Care and Education

Funded Programs

The Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Academic Standards (CARES) program is a component of the larger Kings County Cares About Quality (KCCAQ) initiative, implemented by the Kings County Office of Education (KCOE). KCCAQ is a countywide early education initiative that aims to promote children's access to quality ECE experiences. Early childhood education access can be defined as reasonableness of effort to secure ECE spaces, equity, affordability, and the ability of programs to support the child's development and meet the needs of parents.

First 5 funding for the CARES program supports one additional ECE consultant and funds activities in three key areas: participant and organization level services, quality improvement activities, and coordinated services. The program provides workforce development opportunities, support, and incentives to ECE programs and providers as a mechanism to improve program quality. Services included reviews of personal growth plans, assistance with permit applications and higher education access, and provision of training, coaching, and mentoring.

Participant and Organization Level Services

For the 2023-24 fiscal year, the CARES project used First 5 funding to deliver direct services to 204 CARES participants (unduplicated). Participants included providers from licensed childcare centers and preschools, home visitation programs, Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers, and Family Resource Center staff. Specific accomplishments included the following:

- Provision of direct technical assistance to 257 CARES participants, including reviewing personal growth plans, assisting with permit applications and access to higher education, and providing coaching and mentoring.
- Provision of resource assistance to 392 providers including classroom assessment implementation materials, check-out materials, and computer access.



Coordinated Services

The CARES program also utilized First 5 funds to establish and distribute a countywide training calendar for ECE professionals that was posted on the CARES and First 5 websites and distributed to community partners and CARES participants by email. The ECE training calendar was distributed to 3,662 recipients throughout the program year. Staff also collaborated with the local Resource & Referral program to offer specialized training to 7 ECE providers supporting workforce development goals and hosted Community of Practice groups throughout the year.

Quality Improvement Activities

As part of quality improvement activities for the 2023-24 program year, KCOE offered professional growth training and materials support to 216 providers (duplicated) in response to needs identified through the assessment process. Staff also provided coaching to 121 Family Child Care (FCC) providers and provided stipends and materials to 4,054 participants (duplicated).

For all areas of implementation, the CARES program exceeded contract targets and was able to increase levels of participation relative to previous program years, despite some reduction in annual funding.

Evaluation Summary

The First 5 Kings County 2023-2024 Annual Evaluation Report outlines the reach of Commission investments in early education, health, and family support services for families with young children in Kings County. It provides a snapshot of child and family needs within the community and showcases the efforts of funded partners, who, in collaboration with First 5 staff and the Commission, are working to improve the lives of children ages 0-5 across the county.

The 2023-24 program year marked the fourth year of the Commission's five-year strategic plan. During this period, the Commission continued its support for four primary initiatives: the School Readiness Initiative, the Family Resource Center Initiative, the Early Care and Education Initiative, and the Innovation Initiative. Over \$1.1 million was allocated in contracts with funded partners for the 2023-24 fiscal year. These partners reached 974 children, 850 parents and caregivers, and 253 providers. The investments helped fund a variety of community outreach, direct service, workforce development programs aimed at enhancing child health, advancing early learning, strengthening families, and connecting children and families with community resources and services.

Key Accomplishments Among Funded Partners

First 5 Kings County partners documented several key accomplishments from the 2023-24 fiscal year that include the following:

- The UCP Parent & Me interactive programs were offered to children and families one hour per week across four communities, reaching 235 children at risk for developmental delays and 197 parents and caregivers. UCP also sponsored parent mentoring, offering peer support for families. These services are intended to fill a gap in early childhood systems of care.
- Parent & Me programs screened 133 unduplicated children for developmental delays in 2023-24. All children screened were 3 years and younger at an optimal age for early intervention.
- The Special Needs Project offered coaching to 49 ECE providers and served 7 special needs children in Parent & Me inclusion classrooms where they benefitted from interactions with typically developing children.
- FRCs served 549 children and 481 parents and caregivers offering a variety of health, education and enrichment, childcare, and family support services coordinated with community partners to expand service offerings. FRCs also screened 358 children for developmental delays. Two-thirds of children screened (64%) were under 3 years of age, when early intervention is most effective.
- KUW used First 5 funds to launch its new "Get Connected" community outreach and referral program for families with children 0 to 5 years of age. Kings 211 call specialists were trained to screen callers using a new protocol to identify households with children 0 to 5 years of age. Callers then conducted follow-up to 850 callers. Call specialists made 250 referrals for basic needs assistance and 177 referrals to early childhood programs and services. The leading requests for assistance among families with young children were for housing and utilities assistance, food, and diapers.
- CARES continued to promote children's access to quality ECE opportunities by providing coaching, technical assistance, and stipends to build the capacity of the ECE workforce. First 5 funding was used to employ one additional ECE consultant and to fund activities in three key areas: participant and organization level services, coordinated services, and quality improvement activities. The program reached 204 unduplicated providers over the 2023-24 program year, representing a 19% expansion over the previous year.

Challenges and Opportunities

The 2023-2024 fiscal year marked a period of achievement among funded partners in meeting most performance benchmarks for program reach and service utilization despite reductions in funding allocations. This fiscal year also invited both new challenges and opportunities that provided a focus for future planning and implementation.

Declining Tax Revenues

Funded partners continued to operate in the face of steadily declining revenues prompting providers to scale-back operations or rethink service delivery approaches. This continuing trend places pressure on First 5 Kings County staff and its funded partners to identify new funding opportunities. It also requires First 5 staff to assume a proactive leadership role in helping build professional capacity of its partner agencies to seek and obtain new funding (e.g., identifying funding opportunities, supporting proposal development, fiscal management).

Availability of New Funding

In the face of declining revenue, the First 5 Kings County Program Manager in partnership with the evaluation consultant pursued a new funding opportunity under the California Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS), California Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) to fund Early Childhood Wraparound Services. The proposal, awarded in October 2024, will infuse more than \$1 million in new funding over a two-year period to expand home visitation services and support the creation of a new Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) program to build provider capacity to work with children with special behavioral health needs.

Changing ECE Landscape: Expansion of Transitional Kindergarten

As part of a broader effort to improve early childhood education across California, the state recently enacted a new law to expand access to transitional kindergarten within K-12 education systems. In 2022-2023 California began offering TK programs to four-year old children with increasing eligibility based on age. TK programs within Kings County enrolled 716 children in 2022-2023. These changes aim to provide early education opportunities for all children with a focus on equity and improving school readiness.

Adapting and Aligning

The expansion of TK programs creates opportunities and challenges for existing early education systems and providers, who now face increased competition for the same pool of children, as more families opt for no cost TK programs through their public schools. While changes promise to broaden access to early education, they also require both existing preschool and K-12 systems to adapt programming to be developmentally-appropriate for a younger population. This shift may prompt increased needs for professional development and for increased collaboration and alignment between existing preschool programs and K-12 systems to ensure smooth transitions for children.

Limited Data Infrastructure

First 5 California requires local First 5 commissions to collect, analyze, and report evaluation data annually to the state to ensure performance monitoring and accountability. This includes tracking unduplicated participants across funded partners for accurate accounting of program reach. First 5 Kings County's data infrastructure and technology have lagged behind and fail to capture data from all funded partners, limiting capacity for more robust evaluation of programs and services.

Accudemia Pilot

The AccuSQL database used by FRCs to record program attendance will be phased out in January 2025 and replaced with a new cloud-based platform, Accudemia. First 5 is supporting a 4-month trial period to test out the updated platform with all grantees to capture deliverables for First 5 contracts. The platform will allow First 5 and the evaluation team to report on unduplicated individuals served across programs and activities for the first time and to conduct more comprehensive analyses of child and family participation and outcomes.

Challenges and Opportunities (cont.)

Curricula and Program Structures

Most Commission-funded early childhood education programs (FRCs and Parent & Me classes) do not integrate evidence-based models and are not standardized across programs. Instead, providers rely on program staff to custom design class curricula based on knowledge of early childhood development practices. Disadvantages of this approach include lack of consistency across teachers and centers, time and cost burden on staff, and lack of clarity around intended outcomes that make it more difficult to evaluate fidelity and program effectiveness.

Integrating Evidence-based Programs (EBPs)

Partners should explore ways to integrate EPBs and model curricula into existing services. Use of EPBs ensures that knowledge and research findings of professional experts guide programming, and that program strategies are proven effective for achieving positive outcomes for children and families. Standardized programming with clearly defined goals, expectations for participation, and results allow for improved measurement of fidelity and child and family outcomes (e.g., school readiness, increased parenting knowledge and resilience, improved access to services following referral). New initiatives planned for the upcoming fiscal year (e.g., Help Me Grow, Imagination Library) may offer new opportunities for EBP program implementation.

Limits of Output Measurement

The evaluation approach for First 5 Kings County is guided by the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, which establishes a results matrix and performance indicators for each initiative. Indicators used to track progress toward strategic outcomes measure service outputs, with success defined as increases in participants served or services delivered.

With declining tax revenues, it becomes more critical than ever to build capacity for assessing return on investment, defined by meaningful outcomes for children and families. This requires clarifying program objectives, embedding stronger measurement and accountability requirements into contracts, and supporting funded partners with a robust data infrastructure for reporting.

Refining Performance Measurement Systems

The new Strategic Plan creates opportunities to clarify program goals and outcomes and redefine performance targets and benchmarks in ways that support increased program accountability and facilitate quality improvement. A more outcome-focused measurement approach, supported by evidence-based program implementation, enhanced data infrastructure, and stronger measurement and reporting requirements, could promise more meaningful analyses of program data to better assess return on investment and guide future funding decisions.