



**FIRST 5**  
**TULARE COUNTY**

**5 - YEAR  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**July 2018  
through  
June 2023**



# INTRODUCTION

First 5 Tulare County was established when California voters approved Proposition 10 tobacco tax. This program has benefited children ages 0-5, parents, and service providers in the county in ways that were not possible before 1998. Prop. 10 provides local control which allows counties to plan and implement programs most needed in their jurisdictions.

Prop. 10 distributions to the counties are based on the birth rate for each county. In Tulare County the birth rate is 80.7 births per 1,000 women, or about 7,650 births annually, and First 5 Tulare's Prop 10 annual allocation is approximately \$5.1 million per year (in 2017). This funding provides innovative child development and safety net program services throughout Tulare County, and promotes partnering with other organizations to combine funds to provide services for as many families as possible.

The Children and Families Act of 1998 requires First 5 commissions to have a strategic plan to guide their work. This *Strategic Plan* will assist and guide the Commission through the years 2018-2023, and provides the framework for how the Commission will achieve its desired results. It begins with a high level Vision for the future, the Mission (how the Vision will be achieved), and the Guiding Principles. The Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles drive the implementation of service strategies and provide the criteria to make decisions to ensure that the effectiveness of funding allocations are maximized in measurable performance. It sends the clear message that the Commission cares about the young children of Tulare County, their physical and mental health, their ability to access needed services and their early education.

The Commission gratefully acknowledges the partnership of its past and current program providers in furthering the mission of First 5 and the collaboration of our program evaluation contractor, Barbara Aved Associates.

## Commissioners

Jason T. Britt, Chair  
Julie Berk, Vice Chair  
Christine A. Nelson, M.D.  
Steve Beargeon  
Maureen Bianco  
Pete Vander Poel

## Staff

Michele Morrow, Executive Director  
Christina Saucedo, Chief Program Officer  
Aaron Cooper, Finance Manager  
Susy Ceja, Executive Assistant  
Melissa Prado, Program Officer  
Joshua Ormonde, Program Officer

## Consultants

Barbara Aved Associates



## PLANNING PROCESS

Community input and data-driven or evidence-based strategic planning helps funders define their direction and decision-making process when making community investments. The assessment and other data the First 5 Tulare County Commission collected to inform the development of this strategic plan, and the key steps it followed, included the following:

### Community Input and Other Data Sources

**Data Dashboard.** Community indicators that align with each of the Commission’s goal areas, such as the percent of children who visited a dentist in the past year, were identified and the most recently available data gathered and organized into a “dashboard” format. The Dashboard also compares local data to California data for each indicator and evaluates Tulare County against statewide averages. This tool allows the Commission and its partners and stakeholders to track these key data points to monitor progress toward the early childhood outcomes sought by First 5. (To view the Data Dashboard, please visit <http://www.first5tc.org/>.)

**Parent Survey.** A *Parent Survey* conducted in winter 2016 is another one of the data sources the Commission used to establish goals and strategies for this strategic plan. A 31-question Commission survey in English and Spanish was administered to parents receiving services at 5 Family Resource Centers in Tulare County. A total of 241 parents responded to topics that included sources of health information and level of understanding; access barriers and utilization of services; nutrition and other preventive practices; early learning experiences; highest concerns; and awareness and use of community resources. The Commission and community providers will use the findings to support continuous efforts to strengthen and improve programs and measure progress towards the desired outcomes. (The report *Feedback from the 2016 Parent Survey*, which contains a pullout Executive Summary in infographic format, is available at <http://www.first5tc.org/>.)

**Evaluation Findings.** Highlights from annual evaluation reports since 2008 were compiled and reviewed to examine: the program approaches that have increased parent skills, confidence and parenting practices; strategies that facilitated access to services, including screening and referral; interventions that promoted children’s developmental progress; programs and services that are culturally appropriate, integrated, and collaborative; the amount of support for the professional and provider community; and the level of evaluation participation and capacity building that has occurred among grantees.

**Community Input.** To gain an understanding of the perspectives of community members most impacted by life challenges, as well as the individuals who work directly with these families and



the community, the Commission invited input to the strategic planning process through focus groups, key informant interviews and the First 5 Provider Network.

Close to 40 parents/other caregivers attended a community focus group in March 2017 hosted by two Tulare County FRCs, sharing concerns and offering recommendations that endorsed the input from others. Fifteen Key Informants representing a cross-section of Tulare County health and human service professionals, community-based organizations, school administrators, and other individuals with an informed perspective about the Tulare County population and its needs participated in a 1-hour telephone interview with the consultant between March and April 2017. In addition, on May 2, 2017, close to 50 project staff representing the First 5 Tulare County Network of Providers participated in a discussion with the consultant to provide input to the strategic planning process. (First 5 staff were not present at this portion of the Provider Network meeting to offer anonymity and encourage candor.) The grantees were asked similar questions as the Key Informants (and as the Commissioners had been asked in a pre-planning Commission Survey) about families' highest needs, access barriers, best practices, funding strategies and recommended priorities. The input across all 3 groups regarding the top issues of concern was remarkably similar and included a high need for:

- Affordable preschool slots
- Nutrition education, including practical application and access to healthy food
- Parenting support, particularly regarding child behavior
- Awareness and access to services

## FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

### Vision

All Tulare County children will thrive in supportive, safe, loving homes and neighborhoods and will enter school healthy and ready to learn.

### Mission

Support effective programs to improve the development of all Tulare County children ages zero through five, healthy pregnancies, the empowerment of families, and the strengthening of communities.

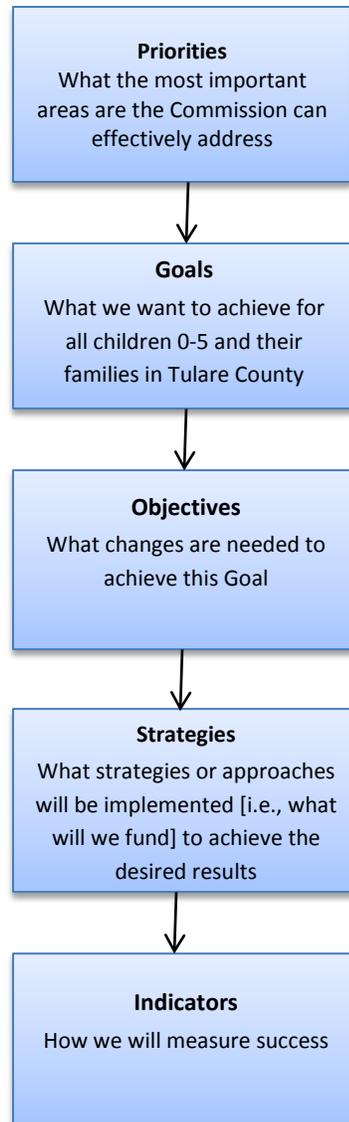
## Guiding Principles

The following principles represent the core values that guide First 5 Tulare in all of its work.

- Expect excellence and allow for innovation in the development and implementation of initiatives and programs.
- Ensure services are accessible, culturally competent, and responsive to special needs and disabilities.
- Respect the diversity, strength, uniqueness, and potential of all children, families, and communities.
- Partner with parents, families, and communities to provide safe and nurturing environments for young children.
- Promote sustainable change by using Commission investments to effect long-term policy, institutional, funding, and systemic changes that extend the reach and impact of First 5 Tulare activities.
- Fund strategies that promote prevention, early intervention and community collaboration.
- Make data-driven decisions that address community needs, build community assets, and prioritize children and families at greatest risk.
- Be transparent and accountable as stewards of First 5 funds.

## STRATEGIC PLAN HIERARCHY

The Commission’s strategic plan hierarchy below—guided by the data sources and community input—can be illustrated by a five-level structure that contains the following elements:



### Strategic Priorities

First 5 Tulare has identified four strategic priority areas for achieving its vision:

- Health
- Early Care and Development
- Strong Families
- Integrative and Collaborative Services

## Goals

- Children grow up physically and mentally healthy
- Children enter school ready to learn — cognitively, social-emotionally and physically
- Parents and other caregivers have the knowledge and resources they need to provide a nurturing environment
- Communities are engaged in supporting and prioritizing children

### Strategic Priority: Health

#### Goal 1: Children grow up physically and mentally healthy

**Objective 1.** Increase the percentage of children with access to quality preventive, primary, and specialty health care.

**Objective 2.** Increase the number of children receiving dental screening, referral and treatment services.

**Objective 3.** Increase the initiation and duration of breastfeeding from birth to at least six months of age.

**Objective 4.** Increase the percentage of children living in safe and healthy environments with access to active recreational opportunities and good nutrition.

**Objective 5.** Increase the percentage of children with access to early screening, identification, and services for developmental delay and mental/behavioral health issues, substance abuse, violence, and neglect.

### Strategic Priority: Early Care and Development

#### Goal 2: Children enter school ready to learn – cognitively, social-emotionally and physically

**Objective 1.** Increase the percentage of parents who support learning in their homes by actively engaging in early development activities with their children including reading to their children.

**Objective 2.** Increase the percentage of children participating in quality preschool and other school readiness programs.

## Strategic Priority: Strong Families

**Goal 3:** Parents and other caregivers have the knowledge and resources they need to provide a nurturing environment

**Objective 1.** Increase the percentage of children whose families have adequate food in their homes and are food secure.

**Objective 2.** Increase the percentage of Families that have access to information about services, and are provided linkages to jobs, training programs, parent education, child care, substance abuse, and other resources that promote family stability.

**Objective 3.** Provide families with targeted intensive and/or clinical family support services, including home visiting.

**Objective 4.** Reduce the number of children who are abused and neglected, and exposed to other forms of violence in their homes.

**Objective 5.** Increase the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate parent education programs in locations and at times that are easily accessible to parents.

**Objective 6.** Increase the percentage of parents and other caregivers with skills to use effective and appropriate discipline regarding their children's behavioral issues.

**Objective 7.** Increase the number of families receiving parenting information by using the mass media including print, radio, television, and Internet.

## Strategic Priority: Integrative and Collaborative Services

**Goal 4:** Communities are engaged in supporting and prioritizing children

**Objective 1.** Ensure that services are in locations and at times that are accessible to children and their families.

**Objective 2.** Ensure that services are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

**Objective 3.** Ensure that programs and services are integrated to create and maintain an effective system of care.

**Objective 4.** Support the availability of cross-professional training to provide a comprehensive approach to child and family needs.

**Objective 5.** Increase resources and community assets leveraged within the county for programs serving children and their families.

**Objective 6.** Increase public awareness regarding the value of effective programs aimed at young children and their families

**Objective 7.** Increase organizations' ability to achieve program sustainability through training, technical assistance, and the ability to communicate accomplishments effectively.

## Service Delivery Strategies

To achieve its mission, the Commission will provide funding in the following areas. There is no significance to their order. The Commission recognizes there are overlaps among the strategies, and some can be implemented to address multiple strategic plan objectives

- 1. Children's Health:** Strategies in this area include support to organizations for improving children's access to medical, dental, and behavioral health care to ensure children are born healthy, and remain healthy throughout their childhood.
- 2. Mental Health, Early Screening and Treatment Services:** These strategies encompass early identification, assessment, and treatment services through Family Resource Centers, school readiness programs, and other similar programs.
- 3. School Readiness:** These strategies include preschool classes, delivery of home-based curricula, summer bridge programs, support for parents as their children's first teachers, and similar services to ensure children are in environments conducive to their development.
- 4. Family Resource Centers:** This strategy recognizes family resource centers as being community focused and comprehensive in the range of services provided to children and families. Parent education, information and referral, case management, home visits, health screenings and services, and mental health counseling are examples of services provided by FRCs.
- 5. Parent Education:** These strategies focus on the family and include classes such as parenting skills and nutrition, the distribution of *Kit for New Parents*, family literacy programs and media campaigns designed to build parent confidence and support a child's overall well-being.
- 6. Community Education:** These strategies focus on the community and support broad understanding of the value of quality early childhood development activities. Having this understanding increases the likelihood of financial sustainability for funded programs.

7. **Capacity Building:** These strategies support training, professional development and other activities to increase the ability of organizations and personnel to meet the needs of young children and their families.

8. **System Access, Integration, and Collaboration:** Access strategies support information and referral programs to increase awareness and linkage to services, while integration is supported through funding partnerships and staff participation in planning and collaborative efforts.

9. **Special Project Grants:** This strategy provides grants for projects and programs that are not addressed under other funding approaches. The special project grant format also allows the Commission to respond rapidly to unanticipated circumstances affecting children and families.

10. **Advocacy:** These strategies promote advocacy on behalf of young children and their families.

## Indicators

Indicators of success in achieving goals and objectives “are quantifiable measurements, agreed to beforehand, that reflect the critical success factors of an organization [or county].”<sup>1</sup> Grantees’ evaluation plans address specific indicators that measure the impacts of Commission funding and demonstrate how funded projects positively contribute to “moving the dial” on improvement. *Examples* of Commission indicators are those in the Data Dashboard, such as the following, but are not be limited to these:

- The percent of women who initiate and maintain breastfeeding for 6 months after childbirth
- The percent of children ages 0-5 whose parents read books with them every day
- The percent of children enrolled in health insurance
- The percentage of children ages 0-17 living in households with limited or uncertain access to adequate food
- The estimated percentage of children ages 3-5 not enrolled in preschool or kindergarten
- The number of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children under age 18
- The number of 2-1-1 calls that connect to community referrals
- The percent of women who begin prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wordpress.org>.



## EVALUATION

Evaluation drives learning. First 5 Tulare County and its partners will continue to gather, analyze, and report information about the services provided and the effectiveness of those services. Evaluation includes both process and outcome measures. Process or performance measures focus on what and how much was done (e.g., the number of children who were screened) while outcome measures tell about changes brought about by those efforts (e.g., the percent of children screened having dental decay who were referred and received treatment). First 5 is concerned with both how well a program is performing and the extent to which services are improving the lives of children and their families.

Each program agreement (contract) will include an Evaluation Plan developed jointly between the grantee and First 5 and in collaboration with the evaluation contractor that will include at least one objective and indicator or outcome measure (e.g., 80% of parents will increase their knowledge of the effects of violence on their children). For programs that have established evaluation tools as a part of the program curriculum, those tools may be used and/or new evaluation tools identified. Grantees will submit data to the evaluation contractor according to a protocol jointly developed by First 5 and the contractor. Additionally, when opportunities for long-term longitudinal studies arise, they will be considered.

First 5 Tulare County will use the Persimmony data system provided by Persimmony International Incorporated to collect program data.

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND FUNDING ALLOCATIONS

Funding allocations will be based upon the First 5 Tulare County Commission's adopted Long Range Financial Plans and annual budgets. The Commission will allocate program funds at a level consistent with available revenue, recognizing that awards are contingent upon the number and nature of proposals considered for funding.

Funding processes, grant programs, and grant amounts will be designed to achieve the objectives as outlined in this strategic plan. Funds may be awarded pursuant to Requests for Proposals, Requests for Applications, negotiated contracts, or other funding mechanisms. Commission operations will be carried out pursuant to adopted policies.

## APPRECIATION

The Commission wishes to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations that also contributed to the updated strategic planning process.

### Family Resource Centers for Administering the Parent Survey

Lindsay FRC  
 Parenting Network Visalia FRC  
 Woodlake FRC  
 Central California Family Crisis Center  
 Cutler-Orosi FRC

### Family Resource Centers for Hosting the Parent Focus Groups

Lindsay FRC  
 Parenting Network Visalia FRC

### Key Informants who Participated in the Community Input Interviews

Name*	Affiliation
Adolfo Reyes	Principal, Sequoia High School
Alex Elliot	Assistant Administrator, Early Childhood Education, TCOE
Beverly Furnier	Head Start Supervisor (Lindsay, Porterville, Woodville Strathmore, Ducor)
Carla Mateus	Program Director, Woodville Child Development Center
Cheryl Duerksen	Former Director, Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency
Drew Sorensen	Superintendent, Woodlake Unified School District
Jose Boroquez	Deputy, Inmate Program Staff, Tulare County Sheriff Department
Juliet Boccone	Judge, Juvenile Court
Katherine Hall, MD	Pediatrician
Laura Esbenshade	Public Health Nurse, Tulare County Public Health
Laurissa Roaggenkamp	Manager, Visalia Parks Recreation
Lorena Castillo	Program Manager, Quality Rating and Improvement, TCOE
Mary Alice Escarsega-Fechner	Executive Director, Community Services Employment Training
Steve Ramirez	Principal, Countryside High School and Tech Prep High School, Tulare
Tim Zavala	Executive Director, Tulare Youth Service Bureau

\*In alphabetical order by first name.