



FIRST 5 MARIN

Learn. Grow. Thrive.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2030

PREPARED BY:

EVALCORP
Measuring What Matters®

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FIRST 5 MARIN 2022-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN



In 1998 California voters passed Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act, a statewide ballot initiative that added a tax to tobacco products. Revenues from this tax are used to fund investments that benefit children prenatal through age five, including programs that promote improvements in family functioning, child development, child health, and systems of care. First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission is responsible for investing Marin County's portion of the tax revenue.

Building On Our History

The 2022-2030 Strategic Plan represents a continuation of the values and efforts detailed in First 5 Marin's prior plans. As with earlier versions, the new Strategic Plan is grounded in listening to and incorporating community voices, ensuring that our approach to developing and implementing programs is equitable, and utilizing policy and systems change investments to strengthen early childhood systems*.¹

*There are multiple ways to define the early childhood system. A commonly used approach was developed by the Early Childhood Systems Working Group. They include the following elements in the early childhood system: Health, Early Learning and Development, and Family Leadership and Support. Health includes mental, physical and developmental well-being. Early Learning and Development includes experiences and relationships that support learning. Family Leadership and Support includes opportunities to strengthen and enhance parents' abilities to support their children's development.



Looking Ahead

The 2022-2030 Strategic Plan focuses on improving policies and initiatives that impact young children and families. Although we will continue to invest in direct service programs that serve individual children and families, funding for these programs will be more limited than in our prior strategic plans. We will focus our direct services funding on programs that meet more immediate community needs and pilot innovative strategies to serve young children and their families.

This shift reflects a landscape of declining revenue from tobacco taxes. We believe that policy and systems change can create meaningful and lasting impacts for a greater number of families, thus maximizing the available tobacco tax revenue.

Decisions about changes in funding will be made by the Commission in collaboration with our partners. We will work closely with our partner agencies to identify sustainable sources of funding to help ensure that the needs of children and families are met.

Planning for Long-Term Systems Change

The 2022-2030 Strategic Plan spans eight years. We selected eight years because systems and policy change efforts are long-term investments. They may be slower to manifest outcomes and may require mid-course changes to ensure success. A multi-year time frame with a purposely flexible Strategic Plan accounts for the complexities of working at a systems level in collaboration with our partners and allows us to pivot, when needed, to respond to changes in the landscape.

Strategic Direction, Implementation, and Learning

The 2022-2030 Strategic Plan provides a succinct description of our strategic direction. It will be complemented by a detailed Implementation Plan, which will provide an actionable roadmap to achieve our goals, and an Evaluation Framework that will guide measurement for decision-making, quality improvement, and ongoing learning.



CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF MARIN COUNTY

To plan First 5 Marin’s work between 2022 and 2030, it is important to understand the landscape of Marin County. We used administrative data to describe the demographics of the County and we also reached out to community leaders and parents (see Appendix B for additional details) to better understand their needs and how they feel about their communities.

Demographic Overview

Marin County is the 26th (of 58) most populous county in California, with approximately 262,321 residents,² with the percent of population increasing almost 4% between 2010 to 2020.³ Marin County includes 11 cities and large areas of unincorporated land.⁴ The population by race and ethnicity is as follows: 85.3% White, 16.3% Hispanic or Latino, 6.6% Asian, 4.0% multiple races, 2.8% Black/African American, 1.0% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 0.3% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander.⁵

Marin County's Population by Race and Ethnicity ⁵



| |
|---|
| 85% White |
| 16% Hispanic or Latino |
| 7% Asian |
| 4% Multiple Races |
| 3% Black/African American |
| 1% American Indian and Alaska Native |
| 0.3% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander |

*The total is over 100% because respondents may choose multiple races and ethnicities.

Administrative datasets are useful for broad descriptions and assessing trends over time; however, these datasets are not perfect and may not accurately represent all segments of a community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the following populations were significantly undercounted in the 2020 Census: Black/African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, and Some Other Race.⁶ Furthermore, the following populations were significantly overcounted: White, Non-Hispanic White, and Asian.⁵

Marin County is one of the richest counties in California,⁷ but many people living in the County do not have high income levels. According to the United Ways of California, **nearly 25% households in Marin County do not earn a sufficient income to meet basic needs.**⁸ As costs of living continue to rise, childcare and housing costs remain significant financial burdens on families.

In addition, Marin County is currently the second most racially disparate county in California.⁹ Racial disparities are the highest in areas of Crime and Justice, Economic Opportunity, Health Access, and Housing. The Advancement Project finds that, across all indicator areas, Black residents are most likely to be impacted by racial disparities. Latino, Asian, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander residents also experience disparities in outcomes.⁹ Racial disparities directly and indirectly impact children and have implications for children's development and long-term outcomes.

Disparities in Marin County also impact the residents that work with children and families. The early care and education (ECE) workforce is particularly impacted. ECE providers in Marin County often do not earn enough money to cover basic needs including housing and routine medical care.¹⁰ Staffing instability and shortages, inadequate working conditions (e.g., lack of breaks, limited planning time), and high turnover are common and further contribute to stress and burn-out for individual providers. These challenging conditions limit ECE providers' abilities to consistently utilize their extensive skills and knowledge to provide high-quality and nurturing care.

Perspective of the Community

Our desire to build upon family and community strengths and address identified needs is part of our guiding values. When describing the challenges families face, community leaders and parents noted circumstances that are associated with the disparities in Marin County. Families and communities in Marin County need:

- **Economic stability** (e.g., affordable housing; better paying jobs; help paying bills)
- **Quality affordable childcare and family services** (e.g., more childcare, health services, and quality enrichment programs; parental support and engagement; cultural competence and inclusion)
- **Help understanding available services and how to access them** (e.g., help understanding services and resources; better times for service appointments)

Affordable childcare and programs for young children were noted as needed, as well as services to support parents learning about programming at schools and computer programs for parents.

Families and community leaders also highlighted the strengths of the community. Most notably, families reported high levels of:

- **Unity and togetherness** (e.g., sense of unity; togetherness; commitment to working together through good times and bad)
- **Resilience** (e.g., working hard; adapting to challenges; being resourceful)
- **Love** (e.g., sense of love for each other and/or others)

We are committed to each other and love each other wholeheartedly.

Loving family and a strong connection with family and friends.



VISION

Every child in Marin County will thrive in supportive families and communities that nurture their greatest potential.



MISSION

We work for and in support of children and families with the greatest need by strengthening systems, advocating at the regional and state levels, and providing services and supports.



COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

First 5 Marin is committed to serving children and families in Marin County through equitable and inclusive community engagement. Through our actions, we aim to combat the harm that historically racist practices have inflicted on communities of color in Marin County.

We commit to:

- 1.** Actively listening to community voices to ensure our work reflects the needs and desires of families living across our County;
- 2.** Looking at our own policies and practices with cultural humility and changing those that interfere with equitable pathways to success for our children; and
- 3.** Learning and growing together to support fully inclusive systems of care that help liberate communities that have been harmed by historically discriminatory practices.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Commitment to Community

- Reflect the varied and diverse demographic and geographic landscape of Marin County.
- Include community voices to ensure that our work and decisions reflect and respond to the needs and desires of families living across Marin County.
- Prioritize children and families living in historically oppressed communities.
- Ensure we respect and empower our communities by recognizing and responding to trauma appropriately and working to eliminate the root causes of trauma.

Focus on Systems

- Focus on equity and justice-centered decision-making in order to address root causes of trauma and inequity.
- Continue to expand our efforts related to sustainable and actionable changes to policies and practices at a systems level.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen and expand partnerships with organizations who support and serve children and families.

Continuous Reflection and Learning

- Build upon our history to guide work and learning going forward.
- Maintain flexible decision-making processes to ensure that we are responsive to emerging needs and opportunities.
- Conduct systematic review of the Strategic Plan goals and progress to guide decision-making throughout 2022-2030.
- Incorporate evaluation, education, influence, and data to inform decision-making.

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

To achieve our vision and honor our guiding principles, we will use the following guidelines to make decisions about our investments.

Alignment with Goals and Objectives

- We prioritize investments that are directly linked to the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.

Equity

- We prioritize investments that reach children and families living in historically oppressed communities.

Responsiveness to Community Voice

- We prioritize investments that reflect the expressed needs and wants of our communities and our communities' lived experiences.

Partnership

- We prioritize outcome-focused collaboration with partners.

Impact

- We prioritize investments based on their potential to:
 - reach the largest number of children and families, and
 - have significant and meaningful outcomes for children and families.

Sustainability

- We prioritize investments that:
 - are likely to continue after our funding ends, or
 - are financially supported by multiple partners or funding streams.



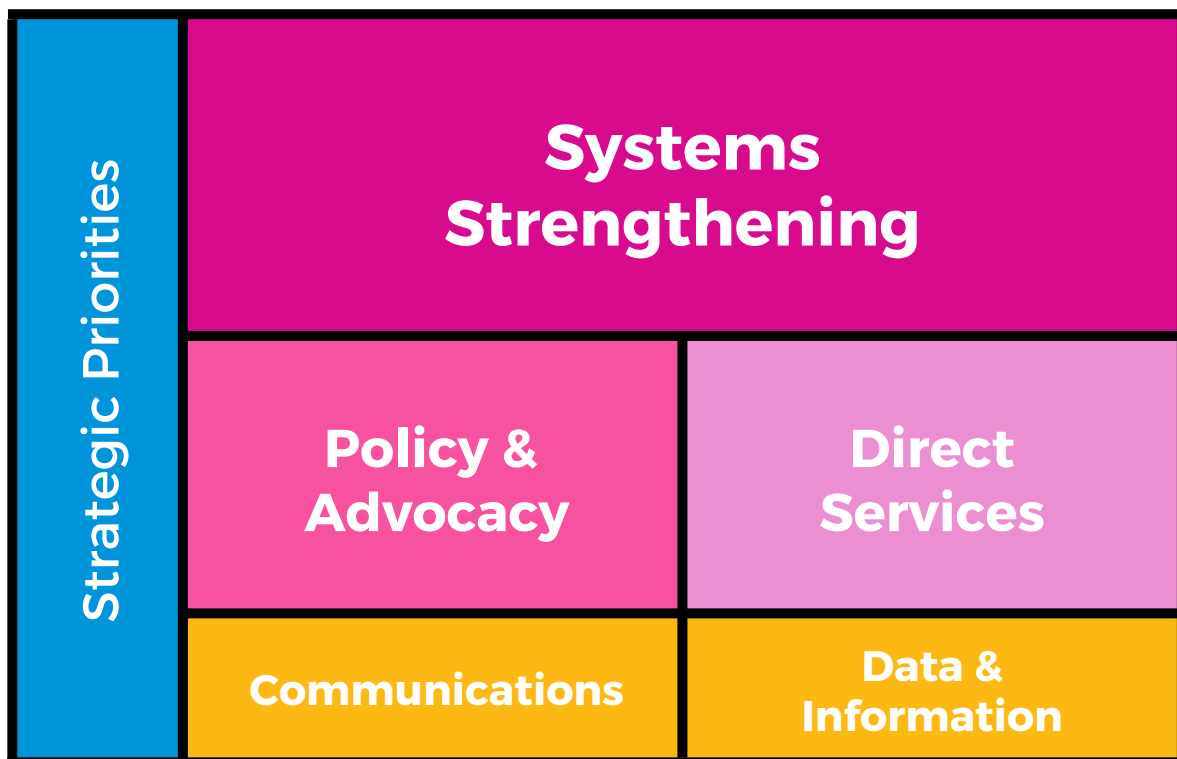
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The 2022-2030 Strategic Plan continues our history of using multiple approaches to improve the lives of children and families. Five Strategic Priorities will guide how we select and design investments.

Systems Strengthening, Policy & Advocacy, and Direct Services¹¹ will be our primary strategies, and Communications and Data & Information strategies will support and complement the primary strategies. Given our need and desire to move our efforts towards systems and policy change, we will reduce the use of Direct Services as a primary strategy over the course of 2022-2030.

We will execute the Strategic Priorities via several roles including: Funder, Partner, Advocate, Communicator and Convener.

More details about the Strategic Priorities and Roles can be found on the following page.



Primary Strategies

Systems Strengthening

We will increase connections and coordination among early childhood systems to ensure services and supports are family-centered, child-focused, easily accessible, equitable, and sustainable.

Policy & Advocacy

We will advocate for regional and state policies that reflect community voices, promote early childhood systems, address root causes of inequities, and remove systemic barriers.

Direct Services

We will fund time-limited programs to address emergent and immediate community needs or to seed innovation and proof of concept.

Supportive Strategies

Data & Information

We will use data and information to inform decision making, drive policy and practice change, and support continuous innovation and improvement.

Communications

We will listen to the voices in our communities and share information designed to increase awareness of family needs and potential solutions.

Roles

Funder

Invest in programs and activities that will lead to meaningful changes for children and families.

Partner

Build and support partnerships that collaborate to develop and implement solutions to family and community needs and address inequities.

Advocate

Use data, research, and experience to influence policy and systems change.

Communicator

Share information about the needs of children and families to inform the public, policymakers, providers, and parents.

Convener

Bring families, providers, government, and other strategic partners together to understand issues and develop policies and strategies to drive change.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



Goal 1: Families are connected to services and resources to optimize their child's development.

- Parents and caregivers have knowledge of and access to timely developmental supports and services for their children.
- Supports and services for children and families are responsive to and aligned with family and child needs.
- Services and supports for children and families are comprehensive, navigable, sustainable, and equitable.



Goal 2: Children have high quality early care and education experiences that promote early development.

- Children have access to high quality and affordable child care.
- The early care and education system has a strong infrastructure and sustainable funding.
- The early care and education workforce receives supports needed to provide and sustain high quality care to children.



Goal 3: Children are physically and mentally healthy.

- Physical and mental health supports for children are accessible and equitable.
- Physical and mental health supports for children have sustainable funding.
- Early childhood professionals receive resources and training to ensure children's optimal physical and mental health.

APPENDIX A: REFERENCES

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APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION AND KEY FINDINGS

The development of First 5 Marin's Strategic Plan was guided by information from multiple sources, including formal mixed-methods data collection with three stakeholder groups. A Learning Summit was conducted at the conclusion of formal data collection to share back and reflect on findings from data collection. Stakeholder groups, data collection approaches, and findings are summarized below.

Current and Potential Partners

Over 50 representatives across 32 community organizations and governmental agencies were invited to participate in an online survey. Survey topics included partnership opportunities with First 5 Marin and the needs of families in Marin County.

In total, representatives from 23 organizations completed the survey. Slightly less than half (n=11) of the respondents represented organizations that were already partnering with First 5 Marin. Most of the respondents represented organizations that served children (n=20) or parents and caregivers (n=19).

Key Findings from Current and Potential Partners

- All respondents indicated willingness to partner with First 5 Marin now or in the future.
- Respondents reported that affordable quality housing (n=21), child care (n=21), and financial stability (n=12) were the top three unmet needs for families.
 - Barriers to meeting families' needs included unequal access to services and racial injustice.
- Respondents reported that high-quality direct services (n=10) that are family-focused (n=14) and facilitated through collaborative efforts (n=16) are most effective in meeting family and community needs.
 - Respondents also noted that there are not enough of these services.

First 5 Marin Commissioners and Staff

Interviews were conducted with First 5 Marin Commissioners (n=8) and staff (n=4) via Zoom. Interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes. Interview topics included First 5 Marin's past work, goals for the future, and data and information needs. First 5 Marin staff were also asked more detailed questions about specific programs and funding priorities.

Key Findings from First 5 Marin Commissioners and Staff

- Commissioners and staff reported multiple organizational strengths including:
 - Responsiveness to community needs (n=10) including flexible programming and providing timely funding.
 - Collaboration with strategic and community partners (n=8).
 - Strong organizational leadership and culture (n=7).
 - Community engagement efforts (e.g., Communications Forums) (n=5).
 - Successful transitions to new Commission leadership (n=4).

APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION AND KEY FINDINGS

- Commissioners and staff highlighted multiple strategies that they hope to include in the next Strategic Plan including collaboration and trust-building (n=6), and sustainable partnerships and funding strategies (n=6).
 - Human capital (n=7) was cited as a possible barrier to achieving organizational goals. Respondents highlighted potential challenges in leveraging collective efforts with partners that are also engaged in multiple efforts.
- Commissioners and staff expressed a desire to focus on actionable steps that will result in meaningful and sustainable benefits for children and families.

Marin Families and Community Members

Marin families and communities were engaged in information gathering in three ways.

Community Survey

Community members were invited to complete a brief online survey (available in English and Spanish) about community needs and strengths. Survey responses from 165 community members were included in the analysis. Most respondents were female (86%) and resided in San Rafael (43%) or Novato (27%). Most respondents had at least one child living in their home (70%).

Learning Bus Survey*

Parents and caregivers were invited to complete a brief survey about community needs and strengths (available in English and Spanish) while their child was engaged in activities at the Marin County Free Library's Learning Bus. Learning Bus staff were available to address questions and/or verbally administer the survey. In total, 20 parents completed the survey. Most respondents were female (n=18) and identified as Hispanic (n=18).

Focus Groups

In person and Zoom focus groups (n=5) for parents and caregivers were conducted in partnership with several community organizations. Focus groups were stratified by subpopulation (i.e., Asian-American [n=4], African-American [n=4], and Hispanic [n=20]) and were conducted in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Topics included community strengths and needs, available services and resources, and recommendations for improving the well being of children and families.

*The Learning Bus travels throughout Marin County and provides bilingual learning opportunities for young children.

APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION AND KEY FINDINGS

Key Findings Across Family and Community Data Collection

- Respondents reported family strengths including:
 - A sense of unity and togetherness, including strength and commitment within families and support provided through relationships with community members.
 - Resilience and hard work in overcoming adversity.
 - Love for their family members.
- Respondents reported multiple family needs including:
 - Improved family economic stability including affordable housing, better paying jobs, and help paying bills.
 - Financial concerns often force parents to decide between work commitments and childcare.
 - More quality affordable childcare and family services.
 - More quality enrichment opportunities for children and families such as playgroups.
 - Help understanding available supports and services for children.
 - Respondents noted a desire for a resource guide or other centralized resource that can facilitate connection to supports and services.
 - Respondents also noted confusion about preschool, transitional kindergarten, and other related programs.

Learning Summit

First 5 Marin Commissioners and staff, partner agencies, and community members participated in a two-hour Learning Summit in March 2022. Findings from the strategic planning data collection efforts (described above) were presented, and facilitated discussions were used to reflect on the findings.

Key Reflections from the the Learning Summit

- Learning Summit participants agreed with the findings presented regarding community needs and strengths.
- Participants highlighted the need to keep the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and families (particularly children's social and emotional health) in mind during strategic planning.
- Participants discussed challenges of systems-level work focused on strategic funding and partnerships rather than direct services.
 - One specific challenge noted is that needs identified during data collection were primarily about the lack of quality services and supports available and challenges accessing those resources. Notably, these types of needs are commonly addressed through direct services.
 - Despite the challenges, participants felt a shift towards systems-level efforts reflects a community with commitment, collaboration, and dedication.
- Participants are ready to focus on next steps including strategizing about initiatives that can lead to meaningful benefits for children and families.



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