



SYSTEMS OPTIMIZATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

A Review of Historical Efforts

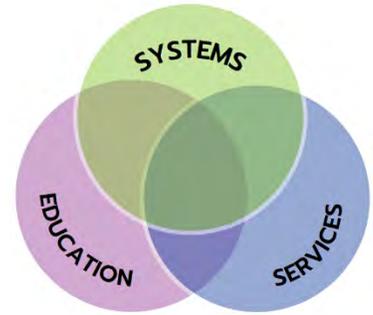


Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
First 5 Sacramento’s Historical Systems Optimization Efforts.....	1
Financial Context	2
HISTORICAL SYSTEMS WORK	3
Baby Friendly Hospital Designation.....	3
Dental	4
Early Smiles	4
Water Fluoridation	5
Dental Clinics.....	6
Home Visitation Coordination Collaborative (HVCC)	7
Tot Lots	8
Certified Sustainable Initiative	10
PAVING THE WAY TO THE FUTURE.....	11

Introduction

In addition to education and direct services, the First 5 Sacramento Commission recognizes the importance of systems change as a critical component to further their mission – particularly to encourage more widespread support and long term sustainability. In August 2017, First 5 Sacramento approved its first Systems Sustainability Plan to define goals, strategies, and objectives for sustaining outcomes in more systemic and cost effective ways.



The Commission established a Sustainability Committee and developed policy and advocacy protocols to be responsive supporters of systems improvements, access to resources, and policies in accordance with the Commission’s approved Policy Platform. These tools have enabled the Commission to effectively respond to the challenge of funding critical services for children and families with declining resources. These efforts also built contractor capacity to look for partnerships and diversified funding sources to support their sustainability.

In 2021, the Sustainability Committee changed its name to the Systems Optimization and Sustainability (SOS) Committee. Chaired by Commissioner Donna Sneeringer, the committee aims to make lasting change and improve outcomes in all of First 5 Sacramento’s priority areas.

FIRST 5 SACRAMENTO’S HISTORICAL SYSTEMS OPTIMIZATION EFFORTS

The First 5 Sacramento Commission has supported a range of historical systems change-focused efforts for the past 25 years. The 2017 First 5 Systems Sustainability Plan included the establishment of a more formal and intentional effort, including establishment of the Sustainability Committee (now known as the SOS Committee). The Sustainability Plan included three objectives contributing to the overarching goal *“to advance children’s health, development, and family empowerment outcomes and strengthen the systems that support them.”* The following figure displays the objectives outlined in the Systems Sustainability Plan.

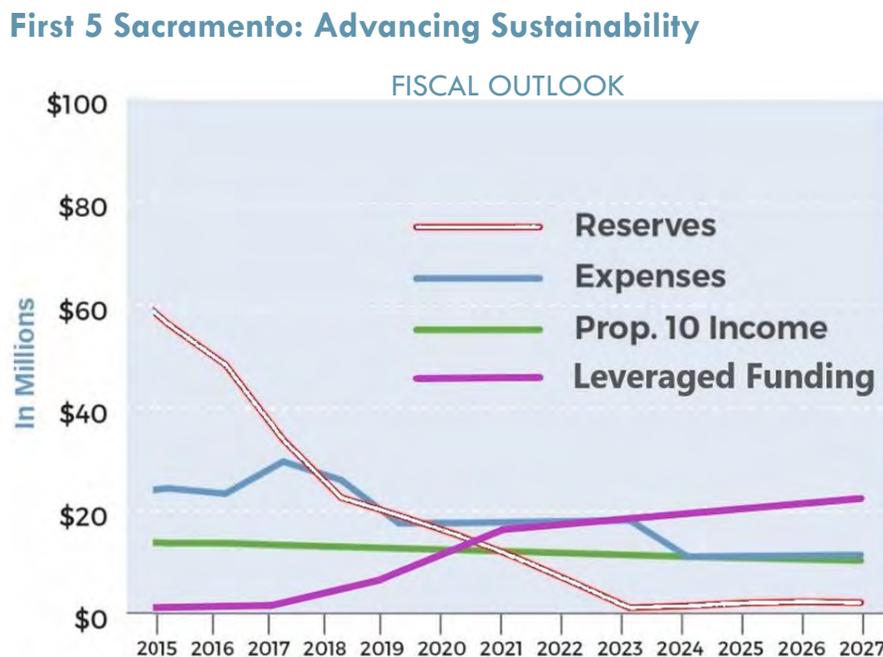
Figure 1. Objectives and Goal Outlined in First 5 Systems Sustainability Plan



FINANCIAL CONTEXT

The Commission’s dedication to systems sustainability creates a path to a strengthened, supported, and collaborative future for programs meeting the needs of children and families despite declining revenues. For more than 20 years, First 5 Sacramento has used tobacco tax revenue through Proposition 10 to fund a range of essential prevention and early intervention programs for Sacramento County children ages 0-5 and their families. However, the Commission’s ability to fund direct services has decreased as Proposition 10 revenues have been negatively impacted by several factors, including the December 2022 California ban on the sale of flavored tobacco,¹ paired with the continued decline of tobacco use in California, tobacco tax increases, and increases in the smoking age from 18 to 21. Decreased funding for direct services further highlights the importance of investing in widespread systems change initiatives to offset decreases while maintaining the commitment to support children and families.

Figure 2. First 5 Sacramento 2015 to 2027 Fiscal Outlook



¹ Senate Bill No. 793, https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB793

Historical Systems Work

The following sections highlight a sample of historical First 5 Commission funded systems successes and do not intend to represent a comprehensive list of Commission activities or priorities. Additional details on systems activities can be found in the appendix.

BABY FRIENDLY HOSPITAL DESIGNATION

Due in large part to First 5's involvement, all eight Sacramento County birthing hospitals received Baby Friendly designations, positively impacting thousands of infants and their families.

The Commission invested in Baby Friendly (BFUSA) efforts for a decade from FY 2004-05 to FY 2014-15. The program focuses on changing the environment and supports available to women within the hospital system to support the initiation of breastfeeding. BFUSA efforts require hospitals to embark on a process of ongoing staff training, policy, and protocol change. By successfully completing a pathway of activities, assessments, and a site visit, hospitals may achieve Baby Friendly designation. In 2009, Kaiser Permanente South and the Birth Center were the first two entities to receive Baby Friendly designation through Commission support.



Photo Credit 1: Adobe Stock Photo

The process of achieving Baby Friendly designation takes time and requires staff and administration support. Over the years, the Commission met with and worked with all eight local birthing hospitals. Each hospital was at a different place in the process. Some were further along than others, and some started and stopped the process along the way. Regardless, the Commission met hospitals where they were, providing funding for training and technical assistance, as well as covering the BFUSA designation fees to help create long term systems change.

As a result of Commission support and funding:

- First 5 contracted with experienced consultants to conduct 24 Baby Friendly trainings with nearly 400 hospital staff registered.
- Hospitals received technical assistance and/or a mock site visit from a consultant familiar with the BFUSA process.
- Pathway, filing, site visit, and assessment fees to BFUSA were paid at least in part for six hospitals.

The work continues:

The Commission's investment to support hospital efforts to achieve Baby Friendly designation continues to have an impact on Sacramento County. Since 2014, Kaiser South, Sutter Medical Center, Mercy General, Mercy San Juan, Methodist, Mercy Folsom, and UC Davis Medical Center have achieved designation or redesignation. First 5's partners, DHS WIC and CRP WIC, continue this systems work through support at hospital task force meetings, nurse skills labs, and engaging in an early notification system (ENS) with Sutter Medical Center, Mercy San Juan, and Methodist Hospital. The ENS process, which also meets Baby Friendly requirements, enables hospitals to refer Medi-Cal eligible mothers to DHS WIC and CRP WIC for early breastfeeding support.

DENTAL

Early Smiles

First 5's partnerships with dental plans ensured continuity of dental services for children ages 0-5 and Center for Oral Health Early Smiles program's self-sufficiency.

Between 2009 and 2018, First 5 Sacramento funded the Sacramento County Department of Health Services (DHS) Smile Keepers program to provide children ages 0-5 with oral health screenings and fluoride varnishes, as well as oral health education for families. In 2018, Smile Keepers shifted to focus on the development and implementation of a countywide oral health plan and no longer supported direct services. To ensure continuity of services, First 5 transitioned to funding the Center for Oral Health's (COH) Early Smiles program during 2018-2021 funding cycle, to screen children and work with health plans to connect families to a dental home.

COH intended to be self-sustaining at the end of the contract period. During 2018-2021, First 5 funded a total of \$625K and led efforts to leverage an additional \$525K from three Dental Managed Care plans. First 5 also worked with COH to help them develop a sustainability plan and utilized their ongoing partnerships and connections to lobby for ongoing support from the dental plans to increase their funding while First 5's contributions simultaneously tapered off. First 5 also provided COH with technical assistance and supported their acclimation into the Sacramento County area.

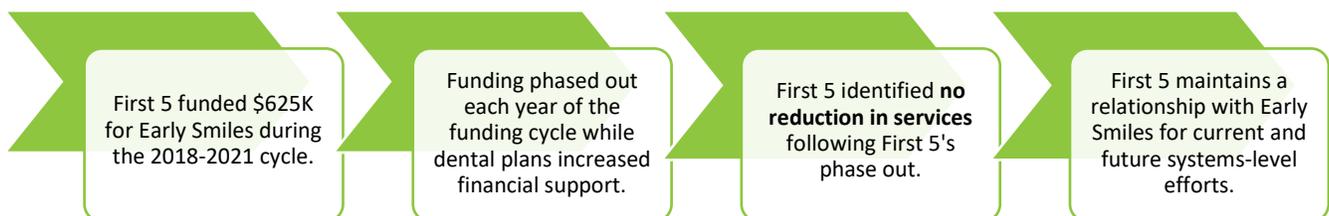
As a result of Commission support and funding:

- First 5 reduced contract costs while ensuring continuity of dental services for children ages 0-5 through leveraging partnerships with Sacramento Geographic Managed Care dental plans and efforts to support COH's self-sustainability following the end of the funding cycle.
- During the 2018-2021 funding cycle, Early Smiles screened more than 18,000 children ages 0-5.
- COH media campaigns further promoted preventative oral health messages and access to dental care to Sacramento County communities.

The work continues:

First 5 continues to be involved in communication with Early Smiles and they continue to provide data about the number of children served, as a result of First 5 Sacramento's initial systems investment.

Figure 3. Progression and Outcomes of First 5 Funding of Early Smiles



Water Fluoridation

Relationships between First 5 and several water agencies have significantly increased the number of fluoridation facilities throughout Sacramento County.

Research consistently shows that fluoridated drinking water helps keep teeth strong and reduces decay which, in turn, reduces costs for families and communities. Due to its largescale reach, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness at reducing cavities in the United States, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention named water fluoridation as one of the 10 great public health achievements in the 20th century.²

The First 5 Commission has been overseeing community water fluoridation contracts since 2005. The goal of the Water Fluoridation Project has been to target water districts that are home to the highest concentration of children ages 0-5 in the county. Funded water districts include Parkway Water District, Sacramento Suburban Water District Town and Country Service Area, California American Water Arden Service Water Area System, California American Water Suburban Service Water Area, Sacramento County Water Agency. Through these capital investments and intentional contract language, funded water suppliers have committed to maintaining fluoridation for a period of 20 years.

As a result of Commission support and funding:

- An estimated 75% of the Sacramento County drinking water has been fluoridated.
- About 65% of children ages 0-5 have access to fluoridated drinking water in Sacramento County.
- The costs of equipment and one year of operating expenses to any mandated or non-mandated water district to fluoridate the community drinking water were covered.

The work continues:

As the 20-year agreement period with some water agencies ends in 2025, First 5 intends to continue its work to ensure that no currently fluoridated areas go without fluoridation after the contract agreement ends.



Photo Credit 2: Microsoft 365 Stock Photo

² "Community Water Fluoridation" <https://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/index.html>

Dental Clinics

Six children’s dental clinics, whose construction and operations were funded by First 5, continue to offer a safe place for children in Sacramento County to access free and low-cost dental services.

Tooth decay is among the top health issues for young children. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, regular preventative dental care is essential for good oral health as problems can be identified and treated earlier. However, many families (particularly low-income families) do not have access to dental insurance or a dental home.³ As a result, First 5 Sacramento contributed funds for the construction and operation of six children’s dental clinics positioned in low income areas throughout the community with a high concentration of need.



Photo Credit 3: First 5 Sacramento

Clinics opened between 2009 and 2018, serving families across Sacramento County from North Highlands through the River Delta area and the southern portion of Sacramento County. The dental clinics historically supported by First 5 funding continue to provide free and low-cost dental services to families in the county. These trauma-informed, gentle pediatric clinics include staff specifically trained to work with children and help families navigate the Medi-Cal dental system.



As a result of Commission support and funding:

- Clinics were designed to be kid friendly safe spaces to get trauma informed and gentle dental care.
- The First 5 funded dental clinics continue to operate in low-income areas of high need. Staff help families navigate the complexities of the Medi-Cal dental system and establish ongoing care.
- Recent data indicate that between 2021 and 2022, sites served an average of more than 6,000 children ages 0-5.

The work continues:

First 5 maintains its relationship with dental clinic partners, who continue to provide service data.

³ “Disparities in Oral Health” https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/oral_health_disparities/index.htm

HOME VISITATION COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE (HVCC)

The HVCC systematically improved the capacity and collaboration between family support organizations and increased opportunities for caregivers to build capacity as community leaders.

The Home Visitation Coordination Collaborative (HVCC) was established by First 5 Sacramento to strengthen (or rebuild) coordination and alignment across home visiting and family support agencies. Throughout the years, HVCC efforts have started and stopped due to inconsistent funding. In 2020, funding for HVCC was reestablished, and due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the collaborative shifted to address the effects of the pandemic on family support systems to help families recover from the effects of COVID-19. HVCC also expanded access to all organizations which support families with children ages 0-5, including education, health, social services, and community supports. The HVCC completed an environmental scan of Sacramento County's communities that had highly concentrated risk and systems which support family and child well-being. Representatives assessed strengths and gaps within home visiting and family support programs, received training to support trauma-informed practices, and began streamlining referral processes to ensure families are connected with the programs that best meet their needs and that these programs are capable of supporting families.

The HVCC also worked to increase community voice, providing training to support parents as advocates at the organizational, local, and state levels. HVCC implemented a parent leadership program that provides a range of equitable and culturally responsive training opportunities for parent/caregiver participants to build empowerment skills and support organizations' capacity to engage grassroots leaders as key partners.

As a result of Commission support and funding:

- Over 30 agencies, including early childhood education, childcare, community incubator leads, family resource centers, and health clinics signed an MOU to work more collaboratively together to best meet the needs of families.
- Parents and caregivers have ongoing opportunities and support to build their capacity as community leaders.
- Six community-based organizations received \$1,000 mini-grants for parent stipends to engage parents in more leadership roles.
- Community members utilized their skills through the community stipend funds for services supporting First 5 efforts such as translation, photography, and media support.

The work continues:

As of FY 2022-23, the HVCC utilized these successes and learnings and transitioned to Sac Family Connect (SFC), which will continue these efforts while increasing accessibility to community organizations that do not directly provide home visiting services. SFC will soon also include a web-based hub for parents/caregivers to identify the support services for which they are eligible and can self-refer. SFC is a hub for providers to access training and professional development resources to increase their knowledge on available services, increase referrals, and improve coordination and service delivery.

TOT LOTS

Tot Lots provide community members with safe and fun places for their children to play and families to connect.

“Tot Lots” are pint-sized playgrounds, each of which also has an adjacent butterfly garden. The First 5 Commission invested in Tot Lots during the FY 2007-2010 and FY 2010-2015 strategic plans as a way to create and promote an infrastructure for families with young children to have a safe, age-appropriate space to engage in physical activity and connect with community. These spaces are required to be maintained for 15 years by the Parks and Recreation districts that were funded to build them.

As a result of Commission support and funding:

- 23 Tot Lots were constructed throughout Sacramento County between 2008 and 2011.
- According to park districts, families continue to regularly use tot lots as a place for their children to play and families to connect.

The work continues:

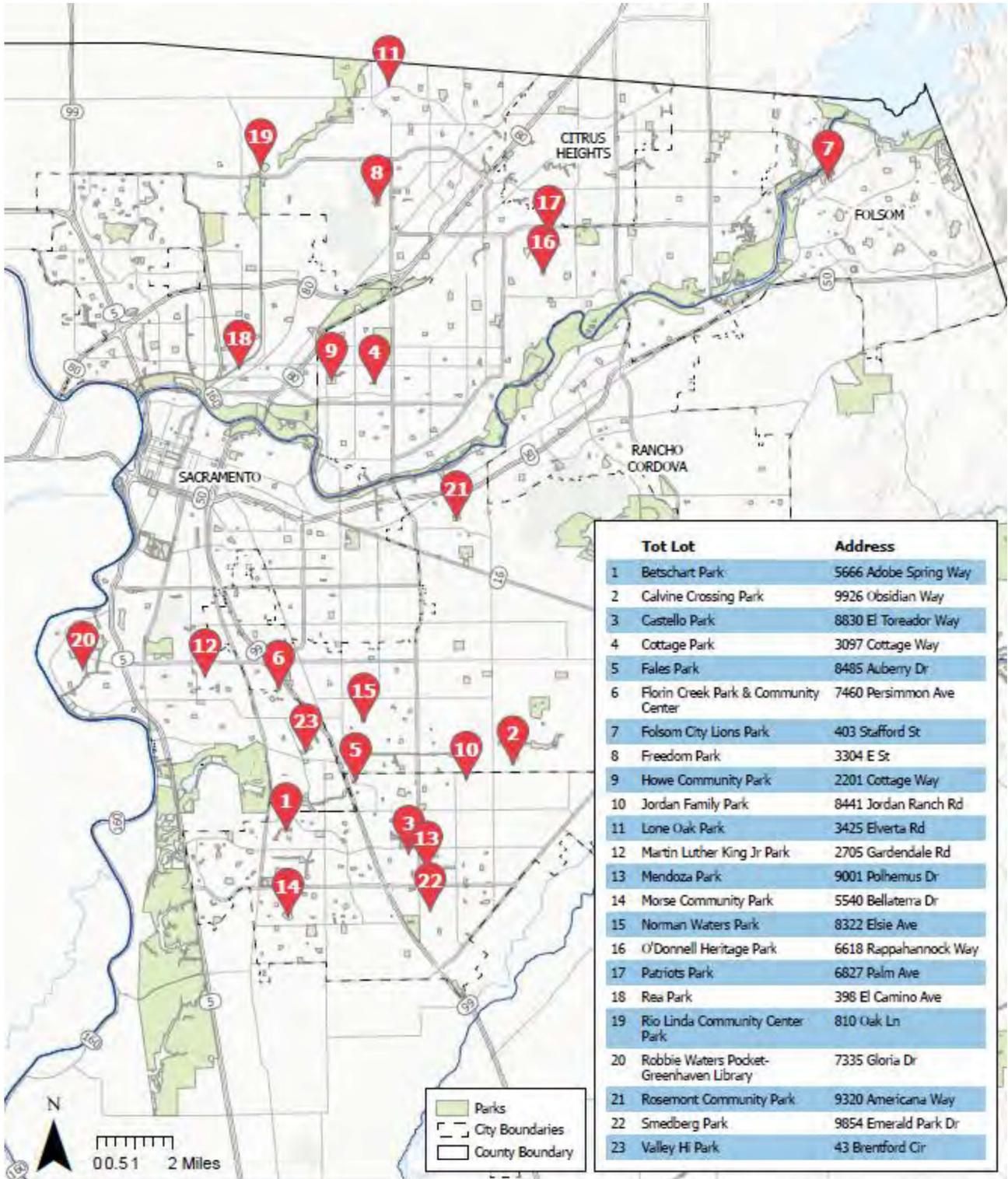
Annual reports from the funded districts indicate that Tot Lots remain in good condition and are utilized by families. Reports also indicate that Parks and Recreation districts are able to rectify any instances of vandalism or damage that may occur. In fact, one of the Tot Lots was badly damaged due to fire during FY 2021-22, and the Parks and Recreation district stayed in contact with the Commission staff and rebuilt the playground.

First 5 Sacramento plans to continue to remain involved in its investment in Tot Lots and will revisit its agreement with the respective Parks and Recreation districts once the contracted 15 years of maintenance is up for renewal.



Photo Credit 4: First 5 Sacramento

Figure 4. Tot Lot Locations



Tot Lots
Pint-sized playgrounds
for young children up to age 5



CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVE

The Commission's dedication to systems sustainability enabled 24 agencies to prepare Sustainability Plans, outlining over \$6 million dollars in leveraged funds and \$1.3 million through cost savings and operational efficiencies.

In 2015, the First 5 Sacramento Commission developed a Policy Platform, created a Sustainability Committee, and integrated sustainability planning into its strategic direction to move beyond grant making. The Commission's Sustainability Committee recognized that each funded agency must be deeply engaged in sustainability planning in order to sustain programs, services and outcomes for children. Working with contracted consultants, the Commission developed a process to provide extensive training and capacity building for its grantees, including a public certification that each agency's long-term program sustainability plans were complete and achievable.

First 5 Sacramento's Certified Sustainable Initiative launched in May 2018 to support funded partners in developing meaningful and achievable plans to maintain their current service levels, even as First 5 funds are reduced by an anticipated 30%. The Certified Sustainable Initiative helped funded partners identify a future where "declining revenues" created opportunities for "advancing sustainability." Certified Sustainable identified the innovative and intentional ways that partners are making progress toward their own sustainability.

As a result of Commission support and funding:

- 24 agencies prepared Sustainability Plans outlining over \$6 million dollars in leveraged funds and \$1.3 million through cost savings and operational efficiencies.
- Participants focused on building capacity in six domains: Revenue Structure; Operational Framework; Engagement of Partners, Board, and Volunteers; The Nonprofit Brand; Measuring Impact and Accountability; and Culture, Decision-Making and Change Management.
- 90 agency staff participated in Capacity Building workshops and received 150 hours of technical assistance and one-on-one coaching.

The work continues:

Through their partnership with First 5 Sacramento on the Certified Sustainable Initiative, the Impact Foundry now has Certified Sustainable as an offering to other nonprofits, involving experts in each related domain.

"...if [we] hadn't been gently 'pushed' into ... thinking outside the box on how to restructure and add additional funds ... we would have gotten to the 30% fiscal cliff without a parachute, and our programs would have suffered." - Certified Sustainable Initiative Participant

Paving the Way to the Future

For 25 years, First 5 Sacramento has maintained quality strategies toward advancing the health, well-being and early learning of children and families. In 2015, the First 5 Sacramento Commission also expanded efforts to support more wide scale policy, advocacy, and sustainability. However, despite all of this important progress, the Commission recognized that First 5 can do more to successfully address disparities in the community. Increased awareness in the importance of systems change to improve the lives of children and families, paired with an uncertain financial climate for future direct services, has led to an increased focus on systems work.

Together with the input from community members and partners, the successes of the historical efforts presented here created the foundation to grow and improve systems and sustainability efforts. First 5 Sacramento developed their 2024-2027 Strategic Plan with an integrated focus on Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Responsiveness (REDI+CR) as well as new critical systems change initiatives to ensure the Commission's continued reach, increased impact, and improved financial sustainability. For the first time, the Commission identified Racial Equity, Parent Partnership, and Systems Improvement as stand-alone priorities for the 2024-2027 strategic planning cycle, including a major realignment of funding for these areas.



Photo Credit 5: Chanel (Neezy) Jeffery / Trevis Washington Photography