

Executive Summary

Key Informant Interviews to Inform

First 5 Alameda

County Strategic Planning

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INTRODUCTION

On May 10, 2012, First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) selected Research & Evaluation Systems (RES) to conduct 20 interviews with key informants. These key informant interviews, together with other planning efforts, will ensure that F5AC's goals, strategies, and funding allocations for fiscal years 2013-2017 will be appropriate for meeting the evolving needs of Alameda County's children 0 to 5 years of age and their families.

METHODS

Approach to Developing the Key Informant Interview Schedule: Starting on May 16, the evaluator began a collaboration with F5AC staff on a rapid turnaround schedule to revise the initial and subsequent interview protocol drafts. After a pilot test interview with a key informant, some of the questions were re-ordered to improve question flow and other questions were revised to improve clarity and reduce interview length.

Setting up the Key Informant Interviews: The initial approach for requesting the interviews was made by letters sent by email. The letters were emailed to each potential key informant explaining why the interview was being requested, asking the person to participate, and saying to expect a phone call to set an appointment for the in-person interview. The letter also explained that a transcript of their interview responses will be shared with F5AC but their names would not be associated with their responses in any publications.

Conducting the Interviews: Between May 23 and June 14, a total of 22 (from the initial list of 27) key informant interviews were conducted, for a response rate of 81%. (See **Attachment A** for a table showing the initial list of 27 potential key informants by category of employment.)

Analyzing Results and Creating a Report: For each question in the interview schedule, a document was created on which a brief description of each key informant's views was tabulated. As interviews were tabulated, the document reflected the extent of commonality and variation in responses across informants. Tables were created and are provided in the full report to provide information on the number of key informants holding each expressed view.

RESULTS

The interview schedule included nine questions. The results for each of the nine questions appear below.

Question 1

When asked to choose from four First 5 Alameda County outcome areas which one was their agency was most aligned:

- 9 chose identification and treatment of children with developmental and behavioral issues
- 9 chose kindergarten readiness
- 3 chose parenting support
- 1 chose parent/primary caregiver mental health

Question 1a

When asked what role F5AC should play in moving toward an early childhood system of care in their chosen outcome area, a total of 43 recommendations were received.

- Two thirds of these recommendations were that F5AC should assume what could be characterized as an intellectual leadership role.
- The remaining third of these recommendations were that F5AC should continue to support or expand specific partnerships or services.

Below are quotes from the interviews that illustrate the range of intellectual leadership roles that key informants suggested.

“F5AC is on the vantage point to have objectivity, set the vision, see connections, develop policy recommendations, and advocate.”

“Continue to serve as convener to develop a large systems effort in this area, including social services, early childhood education, and public health.”

“Lead in the use of common goals, tools and data collection.”

Question 1b

When asked to identify existing barriers to moving toward an early childhood system of care, the most frequent responses were:

- Difficulties in allocating scarce or limited resources, for example, balancing the need to spread resources to a large population vs. giving the resources in a more focused way to a specific population or geographical area
- Existing agencies and systems are fragmented, approaches and outcome measures are not unified
- Knowledge limitations: how to identify families needing services, agencies/services that are available, and how to connect them

Other barriers mentioned included: difficulties in determining and prioritizing, e.g., determining best practices, determining where to start, current organizational/administrative structures among agencies as well as their resistance to change, and a lack of community knowledge on the importance of the early years for development.

Question 1c

Would your agency participate in developing common outcomes and data collection efforts to measure success countywide?

- 19 key informants said “yes.”
- 2 key informants said “it depends.”

Including those saying "it depends," concerns expressed by eight respondents included: we can share aggregate data only; we can find shared outcomes, however, each agency needed to report their own outcomes to funders; and the need to work for simplicity and ease of data collection.

Question 1d

What would you or your agency need from F5AC or others to participate in common outcome definition and measurement?

Of the 20 comments received, the responses of key informants included: leadership (5), funding (4), we are already working with F5AC (2), we need more information about F5AC (2), nothing (1). Seven responses included the need for a goal of designing a data system that does not overburden agencies, including: the system should not require us to duplicate entry for data we are already collecting and entering to meet other funder obligations; the need to identify measures already being collected that could be good measures for this system; and the need for an action plan to identify a few outcomes, and the tools to measure them.

Question 2

(In addition to a short list of systems initiatives that were shown to the key informants), in what other systems-focused initiatives do you believe First 5 Alameda County should be involved?

The many responses obtained are provided in the full report.

Question 3

What other key partners should F5AC be working with that are not currently involved in any systems initiatives as far as you know? The many responses obtained are provided in the full report.

Question 4

Key informants were asked what two roles F5AC should play in promoting a systems-focused initiative in the county. (Two responses per key informant). The roles together with the number of key informants suggesting them are listed below:

- Leadership in determine common outcomes and data specifications ô 10
- Leadership in resource development, e.g., grant writing ô 10
- Leadership in improving coordination between agencies, serve as convener or referral hub for a systems approach ô 9
- Technical assistance, training, and/or professional education ô 6
- Serve as a resource for conducting or disseminating research ô 5
- Provide advocacy and/or public awareness campaign ô 3

Question 5

Other comments on the role First 5 should play to promote an early childhood system of care in the County included:

- Serve as a strong advocate/spokesperson for a family and child-centered system of care ô 5
- Continue to do the good work you are doing ó serve as convener, sit a multiple tables, supporting experts, staying abreast of current research, and planning for the futureô 4
- Continue to work with the school districtsô 3
- Focus on place-based, neighborhood initiatives of communities of greatest needô 3
- Seek funding opportunitiesô 2

Many other suggestions were made and are listed in the report.

The vast majority of key informants are enthusiastic about F5AC taking on this role. For example, one key informant said: “They are doing a great job now, have gotten all of the key stakeholders together, and stay abreast of current trends and research. That kind of research and convening is essential.”

Question 6

Even while moving more into systems change efforts, what role should F5AC play in ensuring that families are able to care for and promote their children’s optimal development?

The most frequently made recommendations:

- Educating parentsô 9
- Providing other parental supportô 9
- Continue to support direct services/include screening/support programs that have demonstrated positive outcomesô 5
- Adopt and advocate a framework for strengthening familiesô 4

Key informants had many comments regarding this question. A comment on parent education:

“Awareness, educating families. I think a lot of neglect issues can be avoided if parents or other caregivers know what issues to be aware of and get services for their children. I see child abuse and neglect has a public health components and educating and equipping parents and caregivers early When they leave the hospital, they should have info on how to contact the services of First 5. This is on the top of my list. System transformation from the ground up.”

Regarding other parental support, a key informant said:

“Providing parents with info or help with nutrition, healthy means, ways to cope when tired and the children want attention. Those kind of everyday things that families need to

be healthy, preserve the mental health of parents. The families need to know how important those early years and not just park them in front of the TV with a cup of noodles. Provide information to parents on how to get it done in a way that is healthy for your family but does not take all of the time and money in the world. Build on the strengths of the family's resources, identify who can help with the family. If you have a dad who does not get along with the mom, figuring out how that dad can provide assistance to that family. Conflict resolution and so forth."

A vision was expressed by another key informant:

"I think promoting more peer support strategies; programs where we have families from specific communities supporting each other (for example, Latinos and Afghans). Organizing some community building to support parents in helping their children grow and develop. Need to empower people on how the systems work, e.g. schools, health care. People may turn to neighbors for advice--- encourage peer to peer, and make sure people know what they are talking about. Seed the community with real accurate information. In a recession, an opportunity: people are more willing to volunteer."

Question 7

What role should F5AC play in assuring that all providers working with children 0-5 have the knowledge, skills, and resources to provide quality services?

Sixteen separate comments were made that First 5 Alameda should continue to support and provide up-to-date training and coaching. Another frequently made comment (5) was that First 5 Alameda should identify what's working, identify outcomes, and monitor quality. Quotes provide some specific suggestions:

"Feeding back the data and the info on what's working. First 5 does a pretty good job on its annual report, but it's it's hard to read it cover to cover when received. More regular reports in a social media framework on what's working and invite taking action. Be strategic and selective."

"Valuable if they played a role in helping the state devise mandates that everyone should follow."

"Train on teacher intentionality, positive behavior management and parent involvement strategies. Teacher intentionality is the process by which teachers work with children with specific developmental goals in mind tailored to the individual child... to help them grow developmentally."

"Provide diverse training geared to the unique needs of the communities in which the providers serve, to be assured that the providers have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and resources."

Question 8

If we want to have a real impact, First 5 believes it must take effective interventions to scale. What approaches can F5AC use to influence city and county government, private foundations and the business community to make early childhood a priority and to commit funds to achieve outcomes?

Seven responses to this question focused on the need to increase contacts with stakeholders, agencies, and potential funders inform to what our system of care has done and clearly articulate common goals, and why it is a benefit to the community to invest in meeting the needs of young children.

Six additional responses focused on the need to partner other agencies, community organizations, and foundations to deliver the message, with three specifically mentioning the ICPC.

Orchestrating public awareness campaigns using multiple media about the importance of the early years -- citing findings from research -- was mentioned by six key informants. The need to develop common outcomes/data driven initiatives in collaboration with others was mentioned five key informants.

Many other suggestions of interest are included in the full report, and include:

- Present a clear strategic plan that shows where First 5 is investing, and how other funders and systems partners can leverage First 5 funding, and vice versa³
- Be clear on priorities/common goals/not try to do everything³
- Have a skilled representative/cultivate community leaders/providers/families to attend public meetings and better advocate by telling their stories³
- Need more targeted data analysis, for example, of the E. Oakland Community, so we can better understand the scope of issues by neighborhood²
- Build a stronger stakeholder community with other agencies, including Children's Hospital of Oakland and the school districts, community based organizations and medical providers²

Key informants gave many ideas regarding how to maximize the effectiveness of contacts with stakeholders:

“A city council member said to us ‘make the case for spending money in this service to have a positive impact in the community.’ We need to make the case of how spending the money in early childhood prevention activities allows us to spend less money in police for child neglect and abuse investigations. Some cities’ mayors are promoting efforts to get reading to grade level, to attract employers with an educated population. Need to think about the way to frame and make more explicit these kinds of messages. Any public entity has lots of competing programs, and need to frame it to appeal to the purpose and goals. There are some existing resources in the “National League of Cities” that are good examples; we don’t have to invent them. Helping people look for opportunities in health care reform and Ca’s budget realignment efforts.”

Engage a broad spectrum of leaders to serve as ambassadors to talk to other policy makers and community leaders about the importance of the mission. For example, when law enforcement comes to the table, the cross-sectional leadership will have a stronger impact in engaging other agencies or leadership to commit funds. Funders want to see effective collaboration in providing comprehensive care.

Another perspective was to engage local leaders through reports on local communities:

“They could produce community-specific reports, research and analysis narrowing down to a city or community level...would be helpful for local government support.”

Regarding the need for a public awareness campaign, one key informant took looked at cultural change from a historical perspective:

“We need a culture change, similar to how we changed our response to drunk driving, littering, seat belts, and domestic violence. If you talked about these things 20 years ago, you will see the extent of change. Need to shift the culture to better understand and put to the forefront the importance of support to children during those early critical years. Reference, for example, brain development research.”

Another key informant expressed a similar message:

“The most powerful form of advocacy is education around the importance of EC, using science-based, research-based info out there. For example, The Harvard Center for the Developing Child, and brain research that shows the importance of the early years.”

Question 9

Is there anything else you would like to suggest for F5AC’s future directions?

- Support for F5AC to take on a systems-oriented leadership role 4
- Don’t give up being innovators in service delivery 3
- We appreciate F5AC! 3 (This sentiment was expressed by many other key informants at various points in the interview)
- Don’t eliminate efforts with positive outcomes, if necessary, reduce funding instead 2
- Do we get to see the report you will write? 2

ATTACHMENT A

Sector	# in original list (N=27)	# inter-viewed (N=22)	# not inter-viewed (N=5)
Education/school districts 1. Barb DeBarger, San Lorenzo Unified School District 2. Suzanne Nelson, N. Region SELPA 3. Kent Rezowalli, Tri-Valley SELPA 4. Lisa Kleinbub, Regional Center of the East Bay	4	3	1
ECE 5. Vincent Cheng, R & Rs 6. Valerie Helgren-Lempesis, FIX 7. Angie Garling, Alameda County Child Care Planning Council 8. Edna Rodriggs, Chabot College	4	3	1
Clinics/Health Care 9. Deborah Workman (for Nance Rosencranz), LifeLong Administrative Offices 10. Hali Sherman, MD, La Clinica de La Raza 11. Ralph Silber, Alameda Health Care Consortium 12. Luella Penserga, Alameda Health Care Consortium 13. Ingrid Lamirault, Alameda Alliance	5	3	2
Community 14. Angela Louise Howard 15. Barbara McCullough, Brighter Beginnings 16. Sandy Taylor, Oakland Fund for Children & Youth 17. Iris Preece, City of Fremont	4	4	-
Public Agency Program Leadership 18. Andrea Youngdahl, Interagency Children's Policy Council 19. Michelle Love, Alameda County Social Services 20. Wilma Chan, Board Of Supervisors 21. Nate Miley, Board Of Supervisors 22. Nancy O'Malley, County District Attorney 23. Rhonda Burgess, Presiding Judge Of Juvenile Law 24. Roger Chan, East Bay Children's Law Offices	7	6	1
Neighborhood Services 25. Olis Simms, Youth Uprising 26. Scott Means, City of Oakland Office of Parks and Recreation 27. Scott Ferris, Berkeley Parks and Recreation	3	3	-
Total	27	22	5