



AGENDA ITEM 8
DATE OF MEETING: July 15, 2009
ACTION: X
INFORMATION: _____

Project Legacy

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

First 5 California staff requests Commission approval to streamline the Project Legacy process (see Exhibit 1). The proposed process expedites the development of program criteria, hereinafter referred to as program goals, which will guide First 5 California's policy and fiscal program decisions.

BACKGROUND

The State Commission adopted First 5 California's 2008 Strategic Plan on September 29, 2007. The Strategic Plan includes an objective to:

Convene a First 5 California legacy programs assessment workgroup to develop criteria for assessing the ongoing viability of programs implemented prior to January 1, 2008 (Objective 2.1.1).

At its meeting on September 18, 2008, the State Commission approved the original Project Legacy process that included convening a workgroup to develop goals for all First 5 California programs. Also approved at that meeting were overall workgroup membership categories. However, due to the recent political environment, the Program Committee approved a staff recommendation to postpone full implementation of Project Legacy until after May 2009.

It is essential at this time for First 5 California to quickly develop program goals so that the Commission can make specific and targeted funding decisions during the state's current economic crisis. This crisis impacts numerous parents and young children and many of their critical support services are either being cut or threatened. First 5 California has an opportunity to develop and support additional evidence-based programs that impact desired outcomes and to help ameliorate the adverse impact of those cuts. In addition, the federal government has created opportunities for expanding and improving early learning through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The streamlined Project Legacy process will allow First 5 California to encourage and support agencies in applying for those funds, thereby potentially bringing additional federal funds into our state.

To expedite the development of program goals, First 5 California staff recommends that the Commission approve the implementation of a modified and streamlined process for Project Legacy that will meet the same objectives as the initial lengthy process, but within an accelerated timeline.

As proposed, First 5 California staff would convene a multi-day meeting with a panel of 10 to 13 experts in the fields of health, child development, education, and family interventions as well as individuals with deep knowledge of California's populations. The expert panel would be charged with recommending program goals. These recommendations would then be shared with county commission representatives, program administrators, advocates, and other stakeholders to receive their feedback and input. This input would be obtained at three forums throughout California (North, Central, and South). Following these regional input sessions, First 5 California staff would finalize the program goals and present them to the Commission for formal adoption.

DISCUSSION

The proposed streamlined Project Legacy process will result in specific measurable program goals that will enhance decision-making and accountability while improving outcomes for children 0-5. The streamlined process will continue to focus on building a legacy for First 5 California's future and impacts the same Strategic Plan Objectives as the initial process, in addition to Objective 2.1.1 cited above:

1. Convene a First 5 California legacy programs assessment workgroup to develop criteria for improving the programs implemented prior to January 1, 2008 (Objective 2.1.2).
2. Research and recommend innovative pilot projects, such as increasing quality preschool spaces, Children's Zones, Educare sites, and school-based health centers (Objective 2.2.1).
3. Develop implementation models for viable pilot programs (Objective 2.2.2).
4. Issue an annual report that includes trends, program outcomes, and policy recommendations (Objective 4.3.3).
5. Identify culturally appropriate best practices for assessing the needs of children 0 to 5 (Objective 4.2.1).
6. Identify culturally appropriate best practices for impacting the needs of children 0 to 5 (Objective 4.2.2).
7. Initiate a longitudinal study of First 5 California-funded programs to evaluate the impact of those programs on the well-being of children (Objective 4.2.3).

Exhibit 2, "Initial and Streamlined Project Legacy Process," summarizes the primary changes between the two processes. Initially, it was anticipated that the workgroup would complete its recommendations by September 25, 2009; the streamlined process strives to reach the same objective by August 2009. The number of experts and stakeholders participating in the workgroup significantly decreases under the proposed

process, as does the number of meetings. Initially, three meetings were scheduled; it is envisioned that one multi-day meeting will be conducted during July - August 2009. In addition, invitations to attend and participate in the regional input meetings will be sent to those individuals and organizations that were originally considered for workgroup participation. Collaboration and consultation with experts, such as the Ounce of Prevention Fund and members of the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, will continuously guide the process. Even though the original workgroup process would have been more open-ended, discussions in this proposed streamlined process will be framed and guided by scientific research.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the First 5 California Commission approve the Streamlined Project Legacy process presented in Exhibit 1 for the reasons that: 1) keeps and/or accelerates the original timeline, 2) continues to meet the Strategic Plan objectives, and 3) does not impose additional costs.

FISCAL IMPACT

This agenda item does not request any new funding.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE REVIEW

On two separate occasions, staff consulted with the Commission's Program Committee, consisting of Commissioners Munger and Dartis, first to discuss the possibility of pursuing a streamlined process, and then to review the agenda item documents. First, the Program Committee members individually discussed the streamlined Project Legacy process on May 22 (Commissioner Dartis) and on June 4 (Commissioner Munger). The Program Committee members were presented with four different options for moving forward with Project Legacy. They asked staff to pursue a streamlined process that used staff expertise, a small expert group, and three regional stakeholder input meetings. They also requested that staff bring an action item back to the July Commission meeting that incorporated their direction for a streamlined process.

Second, on June 29, the Program Committee reviewed drafts of "Agenda Item 8 - Streamlined Project Legacy Process," Exhibit 1, "Streamlined First 5 California Project Legacy," and Exhibit 2, "Initial and Streamlined Project Legacy Process." The Commissioners provided suggestions, which have been incorporated into the final versions of these documents.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Description of Alternative 1

Reactivate the initial Project Legacy process.

Pros

- Maintains continuity with all aspects of originally approved plan

Cons

- Process too lengthy given loss of time
- More expensive than streamlined process

Description of Alternative 2

Replace the workgroup process with a process exclusively driven by First 5 California staff.

Pros

- Less costly than streamlined process
- Faster than original process

Cons

- Less inclusive than original process
- Lack of benefits from nationally recognized experts in the field

EXHIBITS

- 1) Streamlined First 5 California Project Legacy
- 2) Initial and Streamlined Project Legacy Process