



POLICY TOOLS: *First 5 State And Local Policy Tools*

The State of Young Children town hall provides an avenue to engage policymakers and the public in the issues that are important to First 5 and your community. The town hall concept is envisioned to achieve a shared outcome in each county — an annual community event focused on the state of young children — that can be customized to feature issues most critical to reaching your county’s policy education goals.

This section includes practical issue-specific tools you can use to communicate background on your event’s featured policy issues, both at the state and community levels, in order to lay the groundwork for an engaging panel discussion. These materials provide context for your general audience on:

- 👉 What the issue is
- 👉 Why it’s important for children and families
- 👉 What actions policymakers can take to address the issue

CHECK IT OUT!

The Policy Tools include customizable templates and other resources designed to provide you with background information, handouts for participants and guests, internal talking points for spokespeople and participants, and sample questions for panelists to help drive the conversation during the town hall.

Resources included in this section focus on five state policy issues that have been identified as the shared policy priorities of First 5 California, the First 5 Association of California, and county commissions across the state:

- 👉 Quality early learning
- 👉 Early identification and intervention
- 👉 Family strengthening
- 👉 Oral health
- 👉 Tobacco and e-cigarette prevention/cessation

All of the materials link back to early brain development as the foundation for investing in children 0 to 5. This research provides the “why” — the reason the community must come together to discuss these issues, and the need to support young children and families.

Of course, your county is not limited to choosing from the five issues listed above, but all Toolkit templates and example materials focus on these shared policy priorities.

👉 F5 TIP:

So many issues, so little time!

With limited time during a 90-minute event to provide an overview and context for the issues, we recommend featuring up to three issues that are most relevant and timely for your community. Curating the number of issues covered will help First 5 have a unified voice, increasing the likelihood that our messages and Calls to Action gain a collective momentum across the state. Focusing on fewer policy areas may ultimately make it easier for policymakers to commit to taking action on those areas.



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Tools Available in the “Policy Tools” Section:

✓ **First 5 Talk. Read. Sing.® Brain Development Card**

- ✎ A simple yet effective and visually engaging resource that can provide guests and participants with foundational knowledge about the early brain science
- ✎ Provides policymakers and the public with an argument for why the supports for young children to succeed are crucial to every community

✓ **First 5 Issue Paper Templates**

- ✎ Customizable templates tailored specifically for a town hall-type setting
- ✎ Written in simple language targeted to a policymaker audience
- ✎ Include specific actionable policy changes developed in partnership between the First 5 Association and First 5 California, and targeted for state-level policymakers in the 2016 and 2017 legislative years
- ✎ Created to help you communicate both the statewide context and your own local perspective on the featured issues

F5 TIP:

Tailor First 5 Calls to Action

Each Issue Paper’s Calls to Action were written with state-level policymakers in mind. If your panel includes policymakers at various levels of government, tailor the Calls to Action to be relevant to your particular panel. Look for or create a nexus between related local government, community or regional policies, and/or federal-level efforts and to adjust the Calls to Action accordingly.

Front side:

Tell the Statewide Policy Story

- Written to convey the issue from a statewide policy perspective in concise language that can be easily understood by policymakers not generally familiar with the topic
- Includes state-level policy changes directed at engaging policymakers to take specific action

Back side:

Tell the Local Policy Story

- A template your county can customize and use to communicate a particular issue’s local implications
- Should be written to convey the issue from a local perspective in concise language that can be easily understood by policymakers not generally familiar with the topic

F5 TIP:

Front and back sides are a guide

Feel free to adjust to suit your commission’s policies and perspectives. You also can choose to use only the front side (to convey the statewide policy issue) of each issue paper as a single-sided printout.

Back side includes several places to add text so you can:

- Define the issue within your local context
- Describe why it is important to your community
- Highlight positive impacts of local First 5 and partner investments and programs



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✓ **First 5 Association Policy Fact Sheets**

A series of policy and advocacy materials, including one-page policy fact sheets, developed by the First 5 Association that reflect the Association's policy agenda

While not developed specifically for a town hall audience, they provide additional background information on each topic that may be useful as you plan your event

✓ **Sample Internal Talking Points**

Customizable talking points for internal use only meant to help your team:

- ✎ Hone your messages about the purpose of the town hall
- ✎ Present your featured issues to the general audience
- ✎ Convey key points you want your policymaker panelists to understand, including the highest priority Calls to Action



Use for news media outreach, your county commissioners, other identified media spokespersons or event speakers, expert presenters, and your moderator

**CHECK
IT OUT!**

Carefully consider panelists and customize questions accordingly

If your panel also includes expert speakers or policymakers at various levels of government (local, state and/or federal), modify questions to be relevant to your panelists. For example, you can ask more generic questions about the need to support young children, and how elected officials will work together to drive policy change and address the needs of your community's children and families.

Think about the mix of questions to include. Some can be asked of all panelists, while other pointed questions can be asked of specific policymakers if done in a prepared, supportive, and friendly way.

✓ **Sample Panelist Questions**

Customizable sample questions written with state-level policymakers in mind

Ideas on how to develop the challenging yet supportive questions to ask panelists to meet your goals for the discussion

You can use these templates exactly as outlined, adapt them, or create new issue-specific materials to meet your needs. *See the "Planning" section for ways to use the Policy Tools throughout your event planning process.*