

**Agenda Item No. 3
May 7, 2014 Meeting**

DATE: April 25, 2014

TO: Children and Families Commission of Orange County

FROM: Christina Altmayer, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: First 5 California Matching Fund Program Update and Approve Proposed Program and Budget Modifications

SUMMARY:

The Children and Families Commission participates in three matching fund programs with First 5 California focused on improving the quality of early learning programs. This staff report provides an update on the status of the First 5 matching fund program implementation.

DISCUSSION:

In 2008, the Commission engaged The Bridgespan Group in a strategic assessment of the Commission. The assessment recommended that the Commission increase resources directed to support children's early learning needs. A strategy for accomplishing this has been to participate in the First 5 California matching fund opportunities focused on increasing the quality of early education programs. The three matching fund programs that the Commission participates in include:

CARES Plus – The Comprehensive Approaches for Raising Educational Standards (CARES) program was developed to enhance the quality and retention of the early learning workforce. The CARES Plus Program assists the school districts and other community providers to improve teacher and classroom quality, and expand the statewide utilization of CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) as a measurement tool for evaluating the quality of preschool programs. Use of the CLASS instrument has continued to be an eligibility criterion for future state and federal funding.

Child Signature Program 2 – The Child Signature Program known as CSP2 supports classrooms by providing Early Learning Systems Specialists who assist in the completion of readiness assessments to identify strengths and areas of improvement in classroom competencies. The strategy is designed to provide targeted training and quality improvement support for classrooms and centers. Successful participation in CSP2 is required in meeting the state defined “baseline criteria” required for participation in CSP3.

Child Signature Program 3 - The Child Signature Program known as CSP3 is a comprehensive program providing intensive support to children and families, and coaching and training to early educators. A critical element of this program is providing families with linkages to support services based on an assessment of the child and family needs. (See discussion below.)

A summary that includes information on Orange County's participation in these three matching fund programs is included on Attachment 1.

Orange County Quality Improvement Partnership

The Commission has partnered with the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) with funding from First 5 California to improve the quality of early education programs in Orange County. The goal has been to create a comprehensive system that is not dependent on one funding source, best utilizes current funding, eliminates duplication of services, while improving the quality of services for young children.

OCDE received a federal Race to the Top grant in 2012, in the amount of \$6,678,570 (includes original and supplemental funding) to be expended by December 2015. This funding was used for the development and launch of QualityStart OC, a community partnership designed to umbrella existing quality improvement programs and align and coordinate services to providers and families across Orange County. The funding was also used to develop a comprehensive Early Childhood Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A condition of the federal Race to the Top grant is the development and implementation of a rating system that will evaluate preschool programs. The rating system is an Orange County-specific model and OCDE has participated in state planning efforts to develop a common statewide rating system. The federal funds have also been used as a match for the Commission's participation in First 5 California program opportunities.

Alignment of all program services has included: highly qualified technical assistance and coaching provided to Early Care and Education directors and teachers, yearly reliable CLASS and Environmental Rating Scale classroom observations, and a wide variety of professional development opportunities aligned to the quality improvement rating system and state early education competencies.

CSP3 Program Modifications

The CSP program provides funding for "essential staff" and funding to support quality improvements in classrooms and comprehensive screening and referral services to the families of children enrolled in the classroom. Family services include early screening, physical activity and nutrition education and counseling, mental health support, case management, and referral services. At the July meeting, the Commission authorized staff to develop agreements to implement the CSP3 pending final funding award by First 5 California. The Commission approved the final project scope and contract funding amounts in September, 2013.

During the course of implementation of this comprehensive program, the need for several programmatic changes has been identified. For example:

- One classroom site has withdrawn from the program, the overall funds received from the state would be reduced by approximately \$115,000 annually
- A portion of funds are recommended to be reallocated from training to training materials
- A portion of funds reallocated at a district from Family Support Specialist expenses to School Readiness Nursing time and for a Speech Pathologist

First 5 California's program guidelines allow Commissions to make budget modifications, if consistent with the project scope, up to 15 percent in any budget category as long as it does not increase the maximum grant obligation. Staff has reviewed the recommended changes in program scope, and budget impacts. Needed changes can be made within the state's guidelines, and can be accomplished administratively in existing grantee contracts. Commission concurrence on the budget modifications is requested.

STRATEGIC PLAN & FISCAL SUMMARY:

The recommended action presented in this staff report has been reviewed in relation to the Commission's Strategic Plan and is consistent with applicable goals. There are no funding recommendations included in this staff report.

PRIOR COMMISSION ACTIONS:

- September 2013 – First 5 California Child Signature Program Update and approval of revised contract amounts
- July 2013 - Approval of agreements for Child Signature Program RFA #3
- May 2013 - Authorized submitting an application for participation in the First 5 California Child Signature Program RFA #3, consistent with the terms outlined in the staff report
- May 2012 – Authorized funding application and contracts to implement Child Signature Program #2

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive First 5 California Matching Fund Program update and approve proposed program and budget modifications to the CSP3 program.

ATTACHMENT:

1. Early Education Quality Improvement Efforts

Contact: Alyce Mastrianni

Early Education Quality Improvement Efforts
A Partnership between The Children and Families Commission of Orange County, First Five California and the Orange County Department of Education

Program Name:	CARES Plus
Funding Dates:	2011 - 2016
Funding Award:	\$382,742 annually, 3:1 match
Funded Partners	Orange County Department of Education, Children's Home Society of Orange County
Key Collaborative Partners	Help Me Grow, School District Early Learning Specialists, 2-Year and 4-Year Colleges and Universities
Description	<p>Program provides stipends to early educators working in seven high need cities (Santa Ana, Garden Grove, Anaheim, Orange, Costa Mesa, Westminster, and Fullerton) and/or Child Signature Programs 2 & 3. Participants can choose to participate in different Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core: Includes on-line introduction and video self-study of the CLASS system, on-line "Kids and Smoke Don't Mix" training, in-person Help Me Grow community resource training, and support from a Professional Growth Advisor • Component A: 21 hours of California Department of Education endorsed training • Component C: Professional Growth Advisor Training • Component D: CLASS video coaching program "My Teaching Partner"
Number of Participants:	2011-12: 161 early educators 2012-13: 183 early educators 2013-14: 190 early educators
Accomplishments and Best Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect early educators to developmental resources and early developmental screening through required Help Me Grow training. • Offered over 60 training opportunities on high-quality early education practice. • Program has trained over 200 Professional Growth Advisors • Offer local basic skill computer training • Provide memberships to Orange County Association for the Education of Young Children (OCAEYC) for all returning participants.

Program Name:	Child Signature Program 2 (CSP2)
Funding Dates:	2012 - 2015
Funding Award:	Currently \$70,000 annually, no match requirement
Funded Partners	Orange County Department of Education
Key Collaborative Partners	Local School Districts, Hands Together, Kid Works, Orange County Head Start
Description	Program provides for an Early Learning System Specialist (ELSS) to arrange quality assessments, quality improvement plans, coaching, and training for participating classrooms. The program is aligned with the Race to the Top pilot services.
Number of Participants:	2012-13: 60 participating classrooms 2013-14: 23 participating classrooms (34 moved to CSP3, 3 dropped)

Accomplishments and Best Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 classrooms have reached state-defined baseline criteria and would be eligible for CSP3 participation. • 13 additional classrooms would be eligible for CSP3 participation with staffing changes. • Program is completely aligned with the Race to the Top pilot sites, utilizing the same assessment tools, improvement plans, protocol, and coaching model.
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Program Name:	Child Signature Program 3 (CSP3)
Funding Dates:	2012 - 2015
Funding Award:	\$4,231,000 annually, 1:1 match
Funded Partners	Orange County Department of Education, Help Me Grow, Child Behavior Pathways, Local School Districts, Orange County Head Start, Hands Together, Rancho Santiago Community College District
Key Collaborative Partners	Early Learning Specialists, School Readiness Nurses, Providence Speech and Hearing Center, 3 advising physicians (Dr. Lerner, Dr. Donnelly, and Dr. Taylor-Lucas)
Description	<p>Program provides Essential Staff and Quality Enhancement funds to increase services to children and families and to support continuous quality improvement in 34 subsidized classrooms. Support is offered through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education assessment, coaching, and training. • Mental Health support to children and families as well as behavioral management support to teaching staff. • Family support through home visits, family partnership agreements, case management, and referral. • Health and developmental screening and referral. • Physical activity and nutrition support through parent education, dietary counseling, and teacher education/classrooms support.
Number of Participants:	2012-13: 34 classrooms (30 preschool, 4 infant/toddler), 750 families 2013-14: 33 classrooms (29 preschool, 4 infant/toddler), 726 families
Accomplishments and Best Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical components subcontracted through trusted expert partners. • Strong local evaluation component tracking critical data on child/family outcomes, classroom improvement, and effective referrals. • Program is completely aligned with the Race to the Top pilot sites, utilizing the same assessment tools, improvement plans, protocol, and expanded coaching model. • Program utilizing current resources in school readiness nursing and offering a locally designed nutrition and physical activity component. • Program includes participation of 43 teachers and 36 teacher assistants
Preliminary Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most frequent identified needs of the enrolled child include: family issues (23.8%), need for general information (11.1%), behavioral concerns (10%), development concerns (9.9%) • Most frequent identified needs of enrolled child's siblings include: general development concerns (18.8%), behavioral concerns (17.7%), and education (11.5%)