



# 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

## Executive Summary

## ABOUT FIRST 5 SAN MATEO COUNTY

### Our Mission

First 5 San Mateo County promotes positive outcomes for young children and their families through strategic investments, community leadership, and effective partnerships.

### Our Vision

Success for Every Child.  
*San Mateo County: Where everyone belongs and children lead the way.*

### Who We Are and What We Do

First 5 San Mateo County (F5SMC) is a dedicated champion for young children and their families, investing in early childhood systems to create a more equitable, accessible, and effective network of care and education. As a Strategic Financial Investor, Community Partner, and Systems Leader, F5SMC supports a vision where every child in San Mateo County has the resources and opportunities to thrive.

First 5 San Mateo County is guided by core values, believing our work must...

1. Support the whole child within the whole family.
2. Re-envision systems that serve young children and their families to ensure equitable access and a seamless experience.
3. Embrace the importance of all caregivers in the healthy development of children.
4. Support the right of all children to live, grow, and learn in their communities.
5. Uplift cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity.
6. Believe in the strengths and resiliency of all families and cultures.
7. Expand our collective understanding of the critical importance of supporting and meeting the need for healthy development of all children.

In our work on behalf of young children, we strive to...

1. **Create value.** Invest in approaches that add value to the landscape of supports for all children and families; and, evaluate our strategies to ensure excellence.
2. **Advance equity.** Ensure all children, regardless of circumstance, have the opportunity to reach their full potential, and families are included as partners in decisions about their children.
3. **Drive progress on prevention & early intervention.** Promote positive social-emotional, mental, and physical development in infants and toddlers, and focus on prevention and early intervention.
4. **Promote healing.** Uplift the capacity of providers, partners, and systems to be trauma-informed and promote the healing and restoration of children, families, and communities that have experienced harm.
5. **Achieve sustainability.** Use Commission investments to effect long-term policy, institutional, funding, and systemic changes that extend the reach and impact of F5SMC activities.
6. **Cultivate collaboration & learning.** Build upon and integrate with existing services to improve quality and provide efficient service delivery.

Our efforts are guided by the following frameworks:

1. **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory** (1979), which emphasizes environmental factors as central context to development.
2. **Social Determinants of Health** (World Health Organization, 2018), which outline a set of factors that influence health, cognitive and social-emotional development, well-being, and long-term success of children and their caregivers.
3. **FSG's Water of Systems Change** (Kania, Kramer, Senge, 2018), which outlines six conditions that influence how systems operate and function informing systems change.

## Developing the Plan

After a comprehensive 8-month process gathering input from Commissioners, stakeholders, community members and leaders we learned that...

1. **Families of young children are struggling with accessible quality early care and education, accessible mental and behavioral health supports, and basic needs (e.g., housing, diapers, food).** The high cost of living in the county has made it challenging for many families to not only stay in the area, but to do so without some level of financial stress.
2. **Families often face barriers around awareness of what services are available, how to navigate complex systems and access services, meeting eligibility criteria to receive services, and being placed on waitlists.**
3. **The most common barrier faced when trying to address child and family needs are a shortage of available service providers, including having enough providers that can meet linguistic and cultural affinity needs of families.** These workforce challenges are compounded by a lack of coordination of partners and systems, a lack of sustainable funding, and complex systems that providers must navigate.
4. **Despite the significant challenges that families face, many families are finding ways to be resourceful and have inherent strengths that should be applauded and reinforced.**

# 2025–2030 F5SMC STRATEGIC PLAN

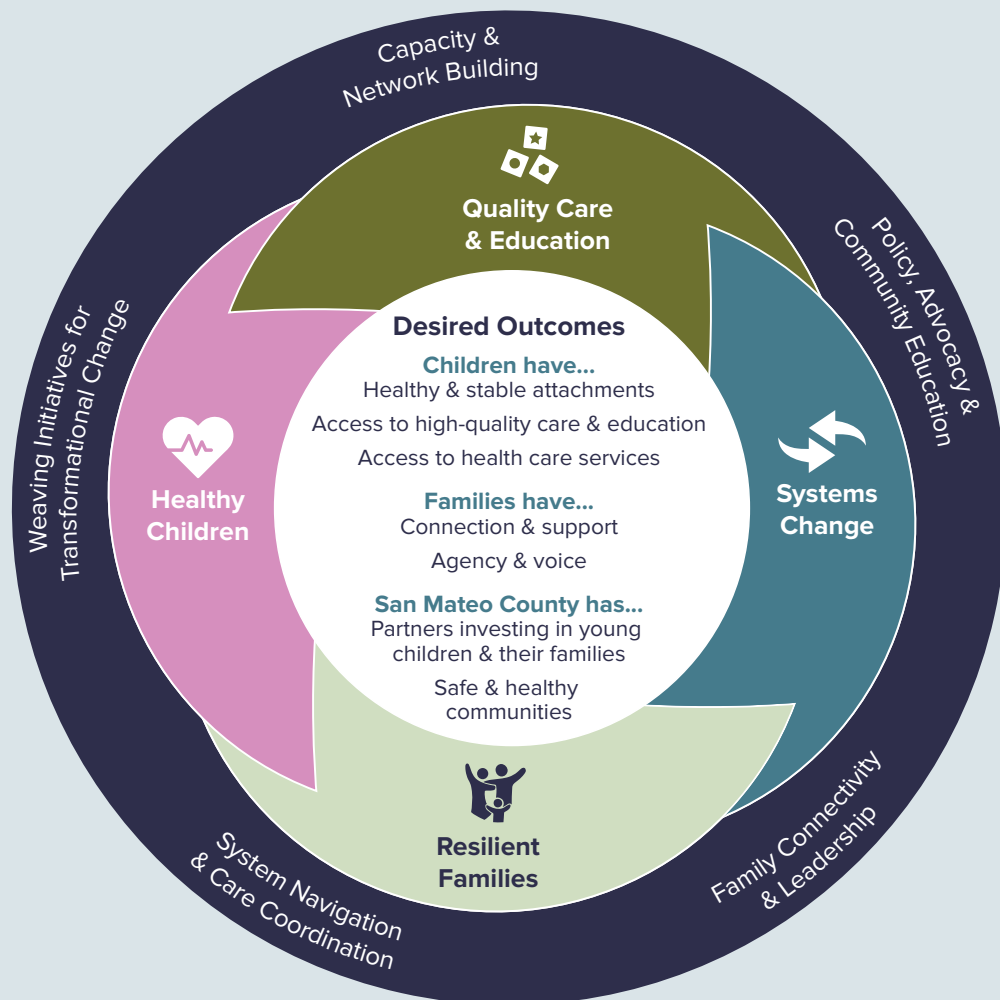
## Introducing the Plan

As children and families live whole and integrated lives, First 5 San Mateo County recognizes that efforts to make a positive impact for young children and their families are inherently interwoven and often intersect. For the duration of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, F5SMC will continue to weave together its three primary community roles: Strategic Financial Investor, Community Partner in aligned efforts, and Systems Leader to advocate for the prioritization of young children and their families in decision-making processes.

## Framework for the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

The 2025-2030 Strategic Plan for First 5 San Mateo County is designed to guide the organization’s investments and actions to achieve the best outcomes for young children and their families in the county. The plan aligns with the Children and Families Act, focusing on building upon local progress and providing a framework for investing Proposition 10 funds. The plan prioritizes early childhood systems and services, aiming to improve outcomes for children and families.

At the center of our framework and the central drivers of our efforts are our desired outcomes for children, families, and the county. We will work to achieve these outcomes by focusing on four intersecting core domains. Changes in these domains can have a direct impact on our desired outcomes. How we focus on the domains will be guided by our five strategies. These strategies inform our investments and actions within and across the domains.



## DESIRED OUTCOMES

The F5SMC Commission adopted the following desired outcomes to direct its efforts over the next five years:

1. San Mateo County leaders and partners fully invest in young children and their families.
2. Communities provide a safe and healthy environment for young children.
3. Children have timely and affordable access to high-quality early care and education settings.
4. Families feel connected to and supported by their community and able to nurture their children's health and development.
5. Children have healthy relationships and stable attachments to their primary caregivers.
6. Children have access to and are utilizing appropriate health care services to meet their health and developmental needs.
7. Families have agency and voice to direct policies and systems that impact their children.

## STRATEGIES

F5SMC has identified five key strategies to achieve these outcomes. Each strategy will be implemented in collaboration with other funding partners, systems, and community organizations to ensure the greatest impact across our four core domains.

### 1. **System Navigation and Care Coordination for Families:**

F5SMC will strengthen system-building efforts to improve families' access to services that support their child's development. By promoting stronger service coordination, care coordination, and case management for families with complex needs, F5SMC will help families navigate systems and resources more effectively.

### 2. **Capacity and Network Building for Child-Serving Systems and Providers:**

F5SMC will work to build and strengthen the systems and workforce that serve children and families, promoting workforce retention, breaking down silos, and increasing collaboration among child-serving agencies. This will ensure that high-quality services are accessible and sustainable.

### 3. **Weaving Partnerships and Innovative Initiatives for Transformational Change:**

F5SMC will lead cross-sector partnerships and amplify family voices to create systems change that impacts the lifelong trajectories of children. By transforming mental models and coordinating efforts, F5SMC aims to create a supportive ecosystem for young children.

### 4. **Family Connectivity and Leadership:**

F5SMC will support efforts to reduce social isolation and empower families by building relationships, providing leadership skills, and offering tools to support children's healthy development. This strategy will focus on positive mental health for caregivers, family advocacy, and building protective factors for children.

### 5. **Policy, Advocacy, and Community Education:**

F5SMC will advocate for policies and build public awareness to ensure that young children are prioritized in San Mateo County. Through strategic policy efforts, communications, and research, F5SMC will drive systemic change to benefit children and families, while promoting understanding of early childhood development topics.

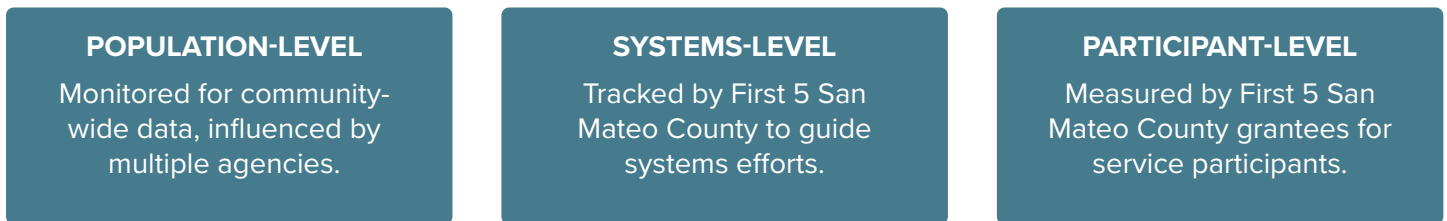
In addition to a focus on these strategies, as a Community Partner, F5SMC will remain engaged in concurrent countywide initiatives, championing the voices of children and families where opportunities arise. By collaborating with other organizations and partners, F5SMC will amplify its impact and ensure that the needs of young children and their families are always represented in local decision-making processes.

## CORE DOMAINS

Success at achieving our desired outcomes for children and families depends on foundational improvements within and across four core domains:

- 1. Healthy Children:** Focus on children’s access to essential services like preventive oral health care, early identification, early intervention, and mental health services to ensure children’s well-being.
- 2. Resilient Families:** Emphasizes the role of secure, stable, and supportive relationships between parents and children in promoting healthy development. It highlights the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework, which fosters parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting, concrete support, and emotional competence. Strength-based, culturally inclusive approaches are critical to family engagement, helping parents nurture their child’s optimal development and advocating for better long-term outcomes.
- 3. Quality Care and Education:** Highlights the benefits of quality early childhood education and care, improving workforce support, and ensuring equitable access to these services to foster child development and school readiness.
- 4. Systems Change:** Stresses the need for a collaborative approach among community organizations, policymakers, businesses, and residents to address disparities in access to resources, especially in a region with significant wealth inequality. This inequality exacerbates challenges for children from low-income families, who face barriers to essential services, contributing to long-term inequities in health and development. Reducing these inequities requires a multifaceted response, including a shared commitment to creating equitable opportunities for all children.

For each domain, F5SMC has identified indicators that will be monitored and measured at three levels:



These indicators help evaluate and adjust the implementation of the strategic plan, ensuring it meets the needs of children and families in the county.

## CONCLUSION

It is with tremendous gratitude for our fellow investors, leaders, and partners that F5SMC celebrates its contribution to the increased well-being of children ages birth through five and their parents in our County. It is also satisfying that as Proposition 10’s funding has decreased, the impact of First 5 continues to be significant.

F5SMC’s pivot from primarily serving as a direct-service grant maker to a strategic investor, leader, and partner has set up its enduring relevance and the championing of young children for years to come. Now at its 25-year anniversary as an organization, the maturation of F5SMC, its leadership, and community partners facilitated the ability to rethink the strategies used to make the most impact. Rather than perceiving the funding decline as a fiscal cliff from which one should recoil, it was embraced as an opportunity to seek out new opportunities for leverage and significance. This creative and opportunity-based approach has yielded profound impact for young children and their families, and reinvigorated F5SMC as a community investor, partner, and leader.