



First 5 San Benito County Strategic Plan 2014 - 2017



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1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Proposition 10

In November 1998, the California voters passed Proposition 10, the California Children and Families First Initiative, which added a 50 cent-per-pack tax on tobacco products. Revenue from the tax is deposited into a trust fund, then disbursed with the intent to promote, support and improve early development of children from the prenatal stage through five years of age. Eighty percent (80%) of these revenues are allocated annually to the 58 individual California counties to benefit children from prenatal to five years old. Each local Commission has control over their own funds and by law is empowered to make local decisions about how funds should be spent. The remaining 20% of the revenues supports statewide programs and research.

State Commission

The California Children and Families Commission is responsible for state-level administration including developing program guidelines, reviewing county plans, and conducting annual program review and evaluation. The nine-member commission also spends 20% of the available revenues annually on mass media communications, parent and provider education, child care, research and administration.

First 5 San Benito County Commission

The San Benito County Board of Supervisors established the First 5 San Benito Children and Families Commission in 1999 to administer and allocate the County's portion of the Proposition 10 funds. The Commissioners represent county government, public health, social services, education, and early care and education. This Commission is required to adopt a strategic plan to guide how funds will be spent and progress will be measured. Local planning must be consistent with state guidelines, and programs must be reviewed and evaluated annually.

Through the history of the organization, First 5 San Benito County has made efforts to respond to the needs in the community and direct funding in a manner that will address identified needs and develop effective systems. Since local funding began in 2001, First 5 San Benito has distributed more than \$8 million within the community in the form of grant funding. In the FY 2011-12 strategic plan, the Commission restructured its investments in the community by decreasing funding to grantees and increasing F5 SBC's role in providing direct services in order to serve more children and their families. The 2013-14 strategic plan further refined this funding strategy, and the 2014-17 strategic plan builds on the Commission's prior decisions to invest its resources in a manner that achieves the maximum impact.

Statewide, Prop 10 tax revenue has been declining, and is projected to continue declining in the future. However, First 5 California has included San Benito County in its small-county allocation and established a baseline of \$650,000 per year for the next three years.

2. PROFILE OF SAN BENITO COUNTY

San Benito County encompasses 1,391 square miles in California's central coast region, between the Santa Cruz and Diablo Mountain ranges. The county is approximately 40 miles inland from Monterey and 95 miles south of San Francisco. The larger, more populous counties of Merced, Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara and Fresno border San Benito. San Benito County, with a mix of row crops, orchards and cattle ranches, has long been thought of as a rural, agricultural community. In addition the county serves as a bedroom community for Silicon Valley, and as a result many residents commute out of county for work.

With a population of 57,600, San Benito County is ranked 17th in California. This 2013 population estimate represents a 4% increase since the 2010 census. Like most counties in California, San Benito is experiencing a shift in majority culture. According to US Census Bureau 2010 statistics, the ethnic distribution in the county was approximately 56% Hispanic or Latino, 38% Caucasian, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, .6% Black or African American and .4% Native American.

Eight percent of the county's population (4,765) are children ages birth through five. In 2012 there were 701 births in San Benito County, primarily to Latino families (72%) and Caucasian families (23%). According to Children Now's 2012-13 California County Scorecard, 90% of women in San Benito County received early prenatal care. Although this places San Benito in the top third of California's counties on this indicator of child well-being, the county is in the bottom third when measuring the percent of children who are born in a healthy weight zone (62%) and the percent of newborns who are exclusively breastfed while in the hospital (45%).

San Benito's children are also faring worse compared to children in other counties on these indicators of well-being:

- 3- and 4-year olds who attend preschool (42%, compared to CA county average of 50%);
- 3rd graders who read at grade level (36%, compared to CA county average of 46%); and
- Children who feel connected to their school (39%, compared to CA county average of 44%).

There were 2,917 English Language students in San Benito County's K-12 public school system in 2013. This represents a 22% increase since 2003 and is likely to be a contributing factor to the county's low performance on the 3rd grade reading indicator. In addition, many of San Benito's children are living in economically disadvantaged families, as indicated by:

- 15% of all children in the county were living in poverty between 2010-12;
- 26% of all children in the county were living in food insecure homes in 2011;
- 58% of San Benito County's students were eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals in 2012, yet only 33% of eligible students were eating meals during the school year.

First 5 San Benito County is committed to investing its resources strategically to turn the curve on these indicators and improve the health and well-being of children from birth through age five.

3. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

VISION

San Benito County's children thrive and reach their full potential at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.

MISSION

First 5 San Benito County promotes the health, early learning, and social-emotional well-being of children prenatal through age 5 via strategic investments and partnerships.

VALUES

Responsiveness

We invest in programs and partnerships that are responsive to and reflective of the diverse needs of children prenatal through age 5 and their families.

Strategic Impact

We invest in programs and partnerships that show evidence of effectiveness and produce measurable improvements in outcomes for children.

Collaboration

We lead, convene and participate in partnerships that are aligned with our strategic plan and magnify the impact of our investments.

Sustainability

We develop sustainable programs and partnerships by leveraging our assets with public and private resources.

Innovation

We build upon proven best practices and create integrated, innovative, and cost-effective programs, policies, and systems.

Prevention

We invest in and advocate for policies, partnerships and programs that increase protective factors for children prenatal through age 5.

Accountability

We are transparent and adhere to high standards to ensure that our funds are utilized effectively, in accordance with all laws.

Social Equity

We ensure all children and families have equal opportunities to lead healthy, productive lives.

4. STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS & GOALS

The First 5 San Benito County Commission adopted the following priority areas for 2014-17. These priority areas are aligned with First 5 California's strategic plan and will guide the Commission's investments and activities over the next three years.

SPA 1: Children & Families

- Enhance the system and delivery of services to meet child health, early learning and family and community support needs.

SPA 2: System & Network

- Provide leadership to ensure that First 5 San Benito County's investments result in meaningful, measurable and sustainable impacts.

SPA 3: Public Will & Investment

- Build the community's engagement, investment in and support of First 5 San Benito County's mission.

SPA 4: Institutional Development

- Strengthen First 5 San Benito County's internal capacity to realize its mission and achieve greater impact.

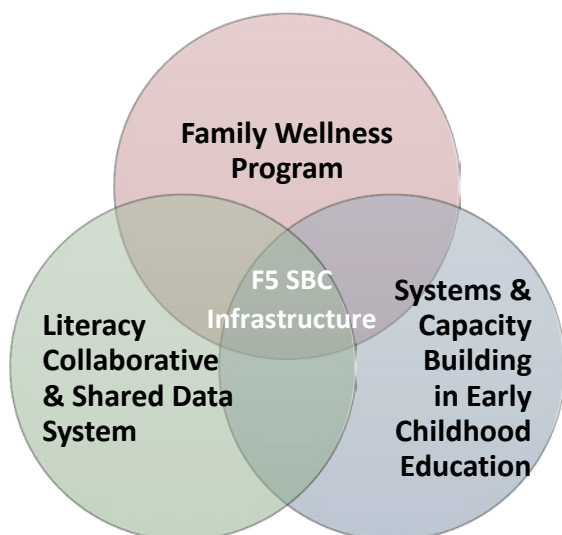
5. STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Over the past few years, First 5 San Benito has intentionally shifted from funding grants to individual programs to investing in initiatives that address multiple priority areas through coordinated systems and services. This funding strategy has broadened the reach and impact of the Commission’s investments and enabled First 5 to leverage its resources through new partnerships and funding opportunities. This has become increasingly important, given the projected decline in Prop 10 revenue.

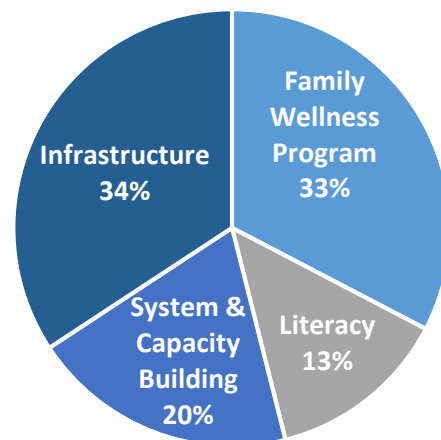
During the 2014-17 strategic planning process, the Commission agreed to continue focusing on strategic initiatives as its primary investment approach. In addition, the Commission may allocate a portion of its funds each year for “Community Response Grants.” This will give the Commission the flexibility to respond to emergent community needs that may not fit within one of the strategic initiatives. The Commission adopted the following guidelines for determining what constitutes a Strategic Initiative (versus a Community Response Grant). These guidelines will help the Commission invest its resources in the most strategic, impactful manner. First 5 San Benito County’s Strategic Initiatives will:

- Address the strategic priority areas adopted by the Commission.
- Identify a broad goal, outcomes, key strategies, and activities.
- Utilize a prevention framework that draws from evidence-based models and best practices.
- Enhance collaboration among multiple sectors and organizations that serve First 5’s target population.
- Provide opportunities to leverage and maximize the impact of First 5’s investments.
- Create systems changes that promote social equity.

Utilizing these criteria, the Commission adopted these initiatives for the 2014-17 strategic plan and allocated its investments across the initiatives.



FUNDING BY STRATEGIC INITIATIVE



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: FAMILY WELLNESS PROGRAM (FWP)	
ADDRESSES STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CHILDREN & FAMILIES ✓ SYSTEM & NETWORK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PUBLIC WILL & INVESTMENT ✓ INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
ANNUAL INVESTMENT: \$258,168	
GOAL: Improve the physical health and development, social-emotional well-being and family environments of children prenatal through age 5.	
OUTCOMES:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Families of children prenatal through age 5 have access to services and resources to support optimal child development and healthy parenting. 2. Families have access to comprehensive preventative and primary health care. 3. Families are aware of the importance of child health and development. 4. Children live in safe and nurturing environments, free from neglect and abuse. 	
STRATEGIES	F5 SBC ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-based home visits • Evidence-based parent education • Parent education & play groups provided by FWP partners and contractors • Preventative health & wellness services • Outreach at health fairs • Injury prevention programs • Screenings & referrals to community resources • Professional development • Trainings on the Five Protective Factors • Resource exchange and stewardship • Communications • Legislative engagement and leadership • Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene and lead network of FWP partners. • Provide services to families served by FWP sites. • Provide parent education services. • Connect families to community resources. • Fund or provide professional development opportunities for FWP partners. • Align resources that support child health & development and positive parenting. • Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices in child health & development and parenting. • Build public commitment to investing in early childhood & family support by communicating the link between child health, social-emotional well-being, positive parenting practices & family support. • Advocate for and influence local, regional, state and federal policies that increase investments in early childhood & family support.

Rationale for Investing in the Family Wellness Program

In FY 2011-12, First 5 San Benito restructured the way it invested in programs that targeted children ages prenatal through five years and their families. Funding was used to establish the Family Wellness Program (FWP), a new service delivery system designed with the following goals in mind:

1. Build the capacity of community agencies/organizations serving children and families.
2. Promote the integration of services for children and families.
3. Enhance the delivery of services to meet the child's development, educational, and health needs.

The FWP is comprised of a coordinated network of programs and services that provide resources and services to eight partnering sites, including home visits, consultants, professional development and technical assistance, book mobile, Fit for Kids nutrition and exercise program, etc. The FWP system and services are aligned with the evidence-based Strengthening Families framework, which promotes five protective factors:

- 1) Parental resilience
- 2) An array of social connections
- 3) Adequate knowledge of parent and child development
- 4) Concrete support in times of need
- 5) Access to quality early learning opportunities

Research demonstrates that these protective factors can form a buffer around the family, which can reduce the incidence of child abuse, neglect and poor developmental and academic outcomes.

During the 2014-17 strategic plan, the Family Wellness Program will increase the availability of research-based information and evidence-based practices by partnering, facilitating, and encouraging families in the high needs and rural areas of San Benito County through parent strengthening group connections and “playgroups” for children ages 0 – 5 years.

In addition to continuing existing FWP services, F5 SBC will add the evidence-based Triple P – Positive Parenting Program to the array of parenting support available through the FWP. During the start-up phase, which is expected to last at least two years, F5 SBC will partner with First 5 Santa Cruz County and other counties that have established Triple P service systems in order to streamline implementation and maximize the impact of San Benito's investments.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: LITERACY COLLABORATIVE & DATA SHARING SYSTEM	
ADDRESSES STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">✓ CHILDREN & FAMILIES <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">✓ PUBLIC WILL & INVESTMENT <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">✓ SYSTEM & NETWORK <li style="display: inline-block; width: 45%;">✓ INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT 	
ANNUAL INVESTMENT: \$106,050	
GOAL: Increase opportunities for children prenatal through age 5 to develop early language and literacy skills that are the foundation of reading fluency by 3 rd grade.	
OUTCOMES: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A multi-agency collaborative of stakeholders adopts a long-term plan to promote literacy and social equity in disadvantaged communities within San Benito County. 2. Early educators utilize evidence-based approaches to teaching early literacy skills. 3. Families provide children with literacy-rich environments and routines that instill a love of reading. 4. Children enter kindergarten with literacy skills that will prepare them for grade-level reading. 	
STRATEGIES	F5 SBC ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Development • Utilization of shared data & common indicators • Professional development • Literacy campaign • Literacy programs for families • Literacy support in early childhood education settings • Prevention & early detection of barriers to learning • Linkages to K-12 school system • Coordination of existing literacy programs • Resource exchange and stewardship • Communications • Legislative engagement and leadership • Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund or co-fund efforts to build a stakeholder collaborative. • Assess needs and gaps related to literacy development, and develop a long-term implementation plan for a comprehensive Literacy Initiative. • Fund or co-fund efforts to establish a shared data system & common indicators that will guide the Literacy Initiative. • Fund literacy programs that demonstrate evidence of increasing early language and literacy skills. • Align resources that support literacy development. • Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices in literacy development. • Build public commitment to investing in early literacy by communicating the link between early literacy, 3rd grade reading and future success. • Advocate for and influence local, regional, state and federal policies that increase investments in early literacy.

Rationale for Investing in the Literacy Collaborative and Data System

This new initiative will focus on closing the literacy gap that exists in San Benito County. Nearly three out of five 3rd graders in San Benito are reading below grade level, a risk factor that has roots in early childhood experiences and is linked to high school drop-out and incarceration rates later in life.

Research shows that children from low-income families hear an average of **30 million fewer words by age 3** than their peers from middle- and high-income households. This means that children living in economically disadvantaged families are more likely to enter school without pre-literacy skills necessary for reading. Given the high percentage of children in San Benito County who are English Language students and living in economically stressed and linguistically isolated families, it is no surprise that 64% of 3rd graders in San Benito cannot read at grade level.

While living in a low-income family does not cause low reading scores, children who are dual language learners and/or from low-income families often experience an “opportunity gap” when it comes to developing the early language and literacy skills needed to become proficient readers. They are often less likely to be read or spoken to regularly, less likely to have access to books and less likely to attend high-quality early care and prekindergarten programs. As a result, these children enter kindergarten already far behind in critical literacy skills, making third grade reading scores a “lagging indicator” that measures an achievement gap that was created years before.

Fortunately, research shows that when high-needs students participate in evidence-based programs that teach foundational literacy skills, they accelerate their rate of learning and gain approximately 1.6 months of reading skills for every month in the evidenced based programs.

During the 2014-17 strategic plan, F5 SBC will invest in the development of a collaborative that engages multiple stakeholders focused on a common goal of increasing opportunities for children prenatal through age 5 to develop early language and literacy skills. The majority of F5’s resources and efforts will be directed toward building a collaborative that will assess needs and gaps related to literacy development, then develop a long-term plan for a comprehensive Literacy Initiative that identifies one or more evidence-based literacy programs to be implemented in high-need areas of San Benito County.

F5 SBC will also take a lead role in funding or co-funding efforts to establish a shared data system and common indicators that will guide the Literacy Initiative. Investing in this type of infrastructure will help ensure the activities and outcomes of the Literacy Initiative are both meaningful and sustainable.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: SYSTEM & CAPACITY-BUILDING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	
ADDRESSES STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS:	
✓ CHILDREN & FAMILIES	✓ PUBLIC WILL & INVESTMENT
✓ SYSTEM & NETWORK	✓ INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
ANNUAL INVESTMENT: \$155,645	
GOAL: Increase high-quality early learning opportunities for children prenatal through age 5.	
OUTCOMES:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early educators provide quality care and education that promotes children’s optimal physical, social-emotional and cognitive development. 2. Families have access to and are receiving high quality early care and education. 3. Children enter kindergarten emotionally, physically and developmentally prepared to succeed. 	
STRATEGIES	F5 SBC ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental screenings & assessments • Professional Development • Training on social-emotional development and self-regulation • Literacy Development • Early Learning Opportunities • Resource exchange and stewardship • Communications • Legislative engagement and leadership • Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities and incentives for early childhood educators to participate in professional development activities. • Fund programs that promote early learning and healthy social-emotional development. • Align resources that support high quality early learning opportunities. • Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices in early childhood education. • Build public will in investing in high quality early childhood education by communicating about the link between early education, kindergarten readiness and future school success. • Advocate for and influence local, regional, state and federal policies that increases investments in high quality early education.

Rationale for Investing in System- and Capacity-Building in Early Childhood Education

The optimal time to detect and address developmental concerns or delays is early in life, when children's brains are still forming and are most receptive to intervention. Early detection and treatment services can vastly improve the developmental outcomes for children with special needs and prevent further progression of delays. While the benefits of routine screening and early intervention are widely known, the service environments that address children's early developmental needs are often fragmented, under-resourced, and lacking in capacity to detect concerns early on.

To this end, First 5 San Benito County plans to invest in a strategic initiative that will promote collaboration between families, health care providers, early care and education providers and community providers. F5 SBC's System- and Capacity-Building in Early Childhood Education initiative will focus on developing a comprehensive, coordinated system for the early detection, referral and care coordination of at-risk children to needed services and supports for development, learning and behavior.

The four core components of a comprehensive system are:

- Centralized telephone access point for connection of children and their families to services and care coordination'
- Community outreach to promote the use of the centralized telephone access point and to provide networking opportunities among families and service providers;
- Child health care provider outreach to support early detection and early intervention;
- Data collection and analysis to understand and identify gaps and barriers.

INTERNAL INITIATIVE: F5 SBC INFRASTRUCTURE	
ADDRESSES STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CHILDREN & FAMILIES ✓ SYSTEM & NETWORK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PUBLIC WILL & INVESTMENT ✓ INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
ANNUAL INVESTMENT: \$270,778	
GOAL: Strengthen F5 SBC’s infrastructure to ensure long-term sustainability.	
OUTCOMES: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. F5 SBC Commission adopts a legal status that provides the greatest degree of operational flexibility and opportunities for sustainability. 2. F5 SBC staff implements a cost-effective and sustainable structure for handling the organization’s administrative, management and staffing needs. 	
STRATEGIES	F5 SBC ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational development • Professional development • Sustainability planning • Succession planning • Evaluation planning • Communications • Legislative engagement and leadership • Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume/Complete process of becoming a separate legal public entity. • Develop & implement plan to meet F5 SBC’s immediate and long-term administrative, management and staffing needs. • Strengthen F5 SBC’s operational structure to support the Commission’s strategic initiatives. • Build internal staff capacity to meet F5 SBC’s immediate and long-term administrative, program and/or operational needs. • Develop annual evaluation plan that is aligned with the strategic plan. • Build public commitment to partnering with F5 SBC by communicating about the impacts of the Commission’s investments. • Advocate for and influence local, regional, state and federal policies that increases investments in initiatives that are aligned with F5 SBC’s strategic plan.

Rationale for Investing in F5 SBC's Infrastructure

First 5 San Benito County was established as a county agency with independent authority over the strategic plan and local trust fund. San Benito County's Prop 10 funds are deposited in the First 5 San Benito Trust Fund, and administered and allocated by the Commission. The County provides human resources, fiscal, administrative and legal services at a cost that has represented anywhere from 5 – 43% of F5 SBC's annual expenses. While these county services have been valuable to the Commission, they have also created budgeting challenges and limited F5's ability to adapt its staffing and programming in response to changing needs. The potential for F5 SBC's portion of the county cost allocation plan to rise unpredictably has also been a concern for the Commission, particularly in light of declining Prop 10 revenue.

In FY 2011-12, F5 SBC received an Organizational Effectiveness grant from the Packard Foundation to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of becoming an independent public entity versus remaining a County agency. The analysis identified potential cost savings by becoming an independent public entity, and the Commission supported the notion of becoming independent in the future.

Since then, F5 SBC has undergone significant changes in its management and staffing structure, and the Commission restructured its investment approach, which resulted in cost savings. In FY 2013-14, First 5 received another Organizational Effectiveness grant from Packard, enabling the organization to update its strategic plan to reflect the current structure and conduct an in-depth study of the feasibility of becoming an independent public entity. In October 2013, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution stating its support of F5 SBC's goal of becoming independent.

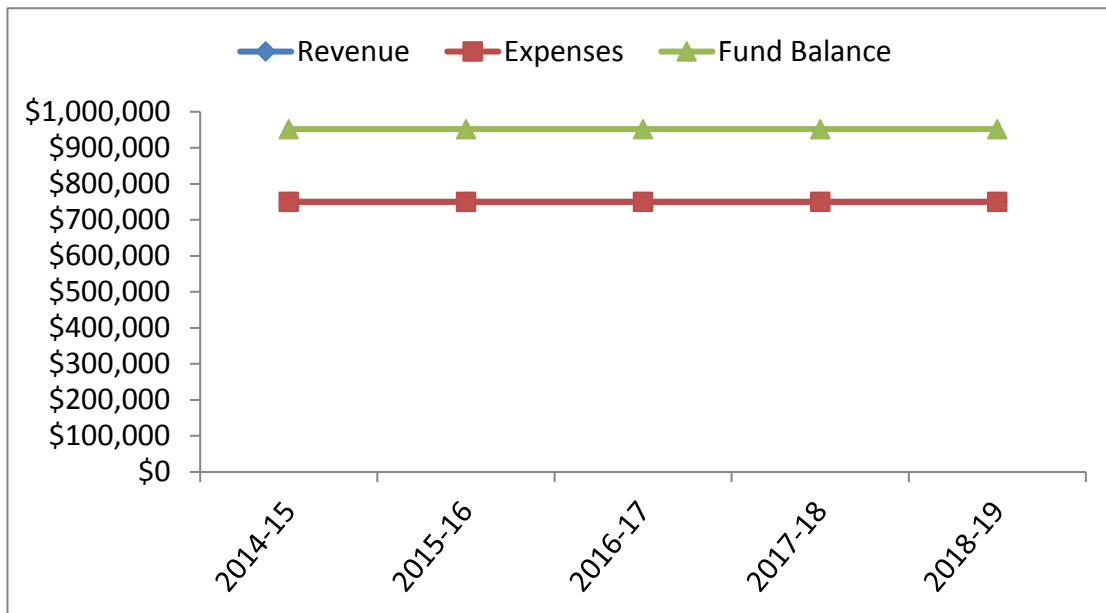
Over the course of the past year, the Commission and staff have worked with Nicole Young of Optimal Solutions Consulting to:

- Thoroughly explore the costs and benefits of separating from the County versus remaining a County agency;
- Assess F5 SBC's needs for administrative, fiscal, and human resources services;
- Identify gaps in services provided by the County and develop solutions for addressing F5 SBC's unmet needs through an improved partnership with the County and/or outsourcing;
- Develop a plan for becoming an independent entity that the Commission can implement when the time is right.

The past year's planning process has positioned F5 SBC to make an informed decision about whether to separate or remain with the County. Recent improvements to F5 SBC's partnership with the County and the organization's administrative, fiscal and HR systems have eliminated the urgency surrounding the decision about whether to separate. During this 3-year strategic plan, the Commission will continuously monitor the costs associated with being a County agency, re-evaluate the rationale for becoming an independent entity, and implement the plan to become independent if and when the timing and conditions are right.

6. LONG-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

First 5 San Benito County’s Prop 10 revenue is projected to remain stable for the duration of this strategic plan, thanks to the small-county allocation funding formula recently adopted by First 5 California. F5 SBC will receive a baseline allocation of \$650,000 per fiscal year from FY 2014-15 through FY 2016-17. This will enable F5 SBC to continue making strategic investments while maintaining a healthy fund balance. The chart below reflects the Commission’s updated 5-year financial plan.



Beginning in FY 2014/2015, a F5 SBC committee will research and evaluate the feasibility of purchasing a facility to be used as a demonstration program. The First 5 Families and Children Center would serve families and children in the high needs area of Hollister.

7. EVALUATION PLAN

First 5 will contract with an evaluation firm to hold an evaluation retreat in the fall of 2014. The commission and strategic partners will develop an evaluation plan. The Executive Director will support regional and state efforts aimed at shared fiscal and evaluation services among other First 5 counties resulting in lowering costs.