



# **First 5 Center for Children's Policy Action Plan**

to Advance First 5 Association Strategic Priorities



**FIRST 5 CENTER FOR  
CHILDREN'S POLICY**



# Overview

In September 2021, the First 5 Association/California Children & Families Foundation, which encompasses the First 5 Center for Children's Policy, adopted a three-year strategic plan to advance our shared goal of building, advancing and protecting the early childhood systems and supports needed to ensure California's young children are safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and life. The strategic plan articulated the following goals and priorities:

## *First 5 Association Strategic Plan Goals:*

- Leadership. Position First 5 as a Leader for Statewide Policy on Children and Families
- System Change. Promote an Integrated Whole Child, Whole Family System of Care
- Local Impact. Support Local Impact and Leadership by First 5 Commissioners

## *First 5 Association Strategic Plan Priorities:*

- Assert Policy Leadership and Drive Systems Change
- Facilitate Member Learning and Engagement
- Center Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in All We Do
- Build Strategic Capacity and Organizational Capability

The First 5 Center for Children's Policy will play a critical role in leading and advancing components of the Association strategic plan. This document outlines the role the Center will play in advancing the First 5 Association strategic plan in coordination with other elements of the organization. Broader First 5 Association activities to refine governance structure and processes will also encompass those governance elements that apply to the Center.

# First 5 Association

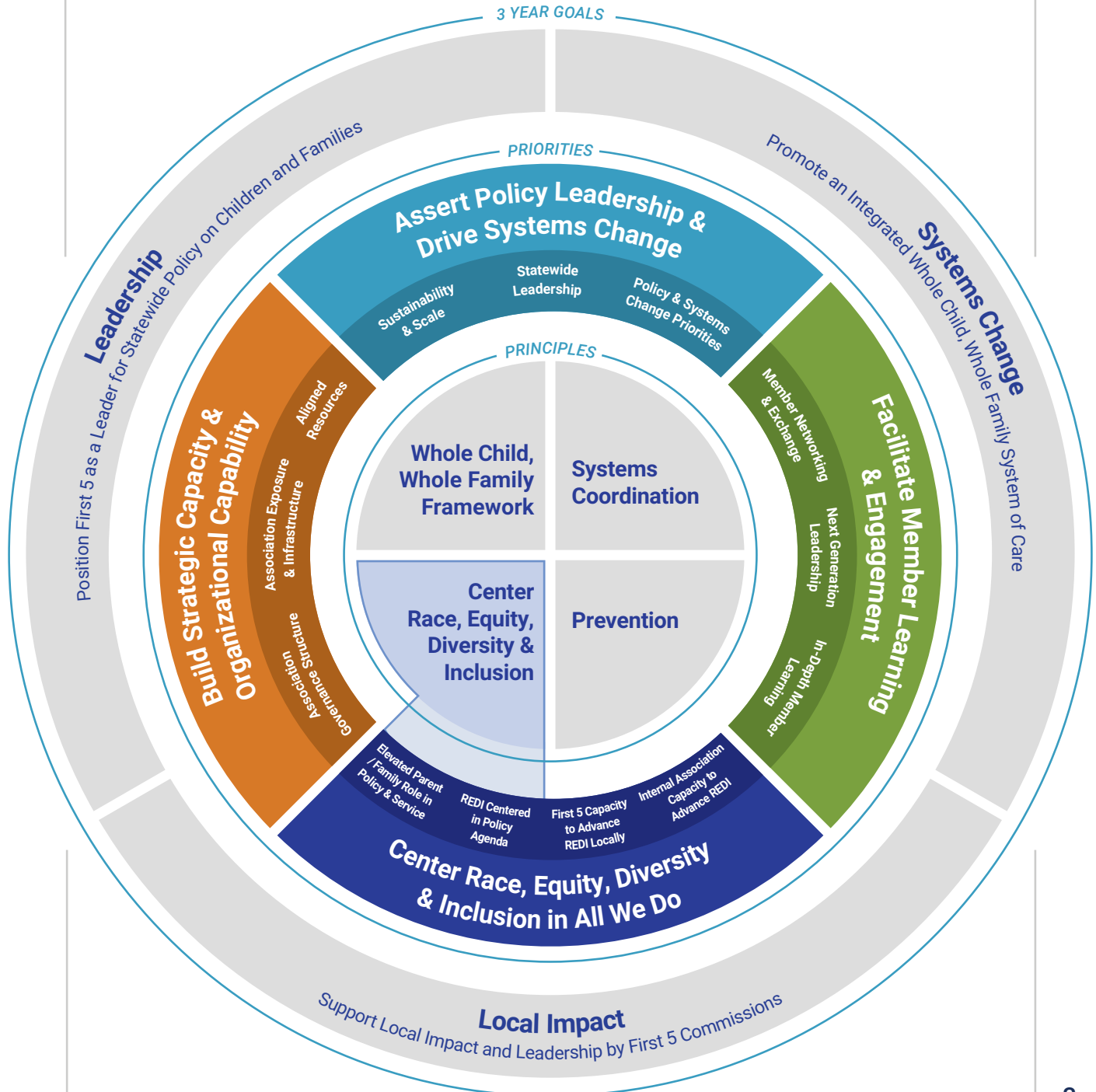
## 2022 – 2024 Strategic Plan

### Our Vision

California's success will be measured by the well-being of its youngest children.

### Our Mission

Advance the building of early childhood systems and supports needed to ensure all of California's young children are safe, healthy and ready to learn so they can succeed in school and life.





# Assert Policy Leadership & Drive Systems Change

The First 5 Association is committed to advancing statewide policies that promote an integrated, whole child and family system of care, and ensuring a continued focus on the well-being of young children and their families. As part of the First 5 Association, the First 5 Center's role is to advance policy development and thought leadership, while centering Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.



# Policy Development

*Develop statewide policy proposals within First 5 Association policy priorities*

## *Description*

The First 5 Association defined three policy priorities for deepened focus and an F5 leadership role in 2022 – 2024, including: 1) Universal Home Visiting and Family Strengthening, 2) Early Childhood Mental Health, and 3) Early Identification and Intervention Systems Development, along with reiterating a commitment to a holistic whole child, whole family, whole community policy platform advanced through active participation in coalitions and partnerships.

The Center for Children's Policy will play a central role in exploring, shaping and ultimately developing specific policy proposals in each of the three policy priority areas defined during a First 5 Association strategic planning process that considered member priorities, the external environment and impact opportunities. The Center will also contribute to the First 5 Association commitment to supporting a broad, holistic early childhood policy platform. In addition to advancing priority policy proposals, Center efforts will contribute to the larger First 5 Association goal of building an enduring reputation for First 5 policy and field leadership. Center activities to advance policy development will likely include:

**Conduct research, analysis and best practices exploration** to enhance stakeholder understanding of issues and inform policy solutions;

Coordinate with First 5 Association staff and members to **incorporate local First 5 experience** and best practices into policy recommendations and proposals;

**Build and maintain early childhood development relationships** and **field leadership** in priority areas;

**Cultivate stakeholder engagement, partnership and interest** in policy priorities, and support the organization's holistic early childhood policy platform, via participation and leadership in convenings, coalitions and collaboratives, and;

**Develop specific statewide policy proposals** for advocacy and advancement by the First 5 Association.

The First 5 Association, under the guidance of members, will be responsible for defining policy priorities, engaging directly with members to leverage field experience, and leading advocacy to enact adoption of policy recommendations.

# Thought Leadership

*Explore and elevate emerging early childhood policy and practice issues*

## *Description*

Beyond advancement of specific policy proposals, the First 5 Association seeks to position itself and its members as policy and field leaders interested in and committed to new policies and practices that improve the health and well-being of young children and families. An important component of this role is actively identifying developments in the field and seeding new thinking on future issues.

The Center will play a central role in identifying, describing and exploring policy and practice issues as they emerge to ensure the organization stays current with the changing landscape of California's families. The Center's thought leadership activities will be informed by member interests, guidance from field and policy leaders, and an assessment of emerging areas of policy focus – and will be rooted in the First 5 Association's mission and vision. This may extend to issues such as family economic support, strategies to engage family voice in policy development, or equity, among other issues.

The Center is a key program within the California Children and Families Foundation (CCAFF), and as such the CCAFF governing body will have responsibility for ensuring strategic alignment between Center thought leadership activities with First 5 Association mission and goals. The First 5 Association will ensure consistent communication to members directly about the Center's thought leadership efforts. Anticipated Center activities will include:

**Research, evaluation and best practices publications** describing emerging practice and lessons in the field;

**Cultivation of field and academic relationships** to track emerging policy and practice issues, and;

**Educational sessions with First 5 Association membership** to review field learnings and implications.

While the majority of Center efforts will be focused on policy development priorities, the Center will devote a minor but critical percentage of its work to seed and advance thought leadership.

# Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

*Center Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in All We Do*

## *Description*

In alignment with the First 5 Association strategic plan, the Center will embed race, equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI) in its thought leadership and policy development activities and participate in First 5 Association efforts to build internal REDI capacity within the organization. Ultimately, the goal of the First 5 Association, including the Center, is to establish REDI as a guiding tenet for conducting all policy and thought leadership work, as well as, eliminating disparities in outcomes and program access among California's young children and families. Likely components of the Center's work will include the following:

Embed equity and disparity reporting in research, evaluation and publications on policy issues;

Address REDI issues in best practices examination and the development/evaluation of specific policy proposals;

Advance policy proposals and solutions that address equity and disparities, such as targeted universalism;

Elevate REDI as explicit components of Center-led and participated coalitions, convenings and collaboratives;

Explore strategies and practices to engage family voice and leadership in the development of policy proposals, and;

Include Center staff participation in and accountability for advancing REDI principles into organizational culture and practice, including building staffing, organizational practices and skill sets.

# First 5 Association Policy Cycle

The First 5 Association employs a cycle of practices to realize policy and systems change, starting from the expertise and field practice of county First 5 Commissions and rooted in the four principles of whole child, whole family frameworks, systems coordination, prevention, and centering race, equity, diversity and inclusion in all we do. By monitoring field and best practices, the First 5 Center plays a central role in identifying emerging issues, and conducting field and policy research. Through these activities, the First 5 Center develops policy solutions, and translates them into specific policy proposals. The First 5 Association uses those proposals in advocacy and communications to make the case for policy change. The implementation and evaluation of those policy changes lay the foundation for additional learning from the field.

