



Imperial County Children and Families First Commission
MINUTES
Meeting of April 8, 2021

I. Call to Order

This Regular Meeting of First 5 Imperial was called to order by Karla Sigmond, Chairperson, at 3:30 p.m. The meeting was held via a video conferencing webinar hosted through Zoom.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

- Yurii Camacho
Ray Castillo
Barbara Deol
Becky Green
Joong Kim
Karla Sigmond

Commissioners Absent:

- Danila Vargas
Veronica Rodriguez
Fred Miramontes

Staff:

- Julio C. Rodriguez
Bea Duran

III. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

IV. Adoption of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Deol and seconded by Commissioner Green to adopt the Minutes of the Meeting held on February 4, 2021; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

V. Consent Calendar Items

Upon review of the consent calendar items for the meeting, a motion was made by Commissioner Green and seconded by Commissioner Deol to approve the consent calendar items; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

VI. Administrative Report (Julio C. Rodriguez, Executive Director)

- 1. Selection of Community Development Mini-Grant Step 1 Applicants: Mr. Rodriguez informed Commissioners that 13 Statements of Interest to Apply were received in response to the Community Development Mini-Grant FY 2021-2022. The Register was briefly summarized, and it was included in the packet.

At this time, Commissioners proceeded to disclose potential conflicts of interest. Commissioner Castillo disclosed having a conflict with the Imperial County Free Library, and Commissioner Sigmond disclosed having a conflict with the El Centro Elementary School District. No other conflicts were further disclosed. As such, Commissioners agreed not to participate during the review of their stated agency conflict; they will mute their speakers.

Commissioners agreed over the procedure for the selection of the agencies that will be invited to apply for a mini-grant application. Mr. Rodriguez further reminded Commissioners that \$150,000 was set aside for funding FY 2021-2022 mini-grant projects. Commissioners asked Mr. Rodriguez to provide a summary of each Statement of Interest to Apply that was received, and to include his input/recommendation of each.

Having comprehensively reviewed each project statement, Commissioners took the following action on whether to invite or not-invite projects to submit a mini-grant application under Step 2 of the Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines.

A motion to invite the Burn Institute was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Castillo. Mr. Rodriguez noted the strength of the application was the number of children they intend to target with the limited resources, although noting that burn prevention is not clearly stated under the Commission's Strategic Plan. Commissioner Deol stated that even though it is not specific in the Strategic Plan it is a good idea to have safety education prevention services. Commissioner Green would like the agency to provide further clarification on how they would offer the services. The motion carried with all in favor.

A motion to invite the Calipatria Unified School District was made by Commissioner Castillo and it was seconded by Commissioner Green. Commissioner Sigmond stated that the Commission has funded this agency in the past, and they have experience with this project. She further noted that the Commission should support literacy education services as much as possible. Commissioner Camacho noted that valley schools are open on a hybrid basis and will re-open after the spring break. The motion carried with all in favor.

A motion not to invite the Brawley Public Library was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol. Mr. Rodriguez advised that the Brawley Public Library should be able to utilize some of the funds that were not exhausted by the LAMBS Project general grant to help fund this request, especially if the books are part of the LAMBS distribution. Having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

A motion not to invite the City of El Centro Community Services Department was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Green. Commissioner Green stated that the statement was not clear, also the project seemed too ambitious and did not provide enough information on the recruitment of the children. Mr. Rodriguez also noted that water safety does not clearly fall under the Commission's Strategic Plan and is not identified as a priority of the Commission. The motion carried with all in favor.

A motion to invite the Court Appointed Special Advocates was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Castillo. Mr. Alex Cardenas, CASA Director, further provided a summary of the services they are proposing to do for the outlying communities, and stated that services will not be replicated. Having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

A motion to invite the El Centro Elementary School District Parent and Community Engagement Center was made by Commissioner Castillo and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol. Mr. Rodriguez noted that it is not clear if other children will be participating; he is recommending that the district try to reach out to younger children within the district that are not yet in the TK

program. Commissioner Green expressed concern over the budget lacking the transportation issue, although she further noted that it is a good program. Commissioner Castillo stated that, according to Dr. Munday (Imperial County Public Health), most of the County should be fully vaccinated at the end of June, not 100% but the majority. They anticipate that normalcy will resume by December. Schools and programs will be able to implement their plans. The motion carried with 4 in favor, 1 abstention.

A motion to invite the Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Castillo. Commissioner Sigmond stated that The Incredible Years curriculum is used by the El Centro Elementary Schools and is very effective for the younger aged children. Mrs. Garcia, CAP Council Director, provided further information about the curriculum, she also advised that parents are offered early developmental screenings for their children as well as PACT sessions. The agency plans to start smaller group in-person classes in September. The motion carried with all in favor.

Commissioner Sigmond made a motion to invite the Imperial County Free Library; however, no action to approve was seconded.

A motion not to invite the Imperial County Free Library was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Green. Commissioner Deol felt that this was not a good time to offer those particular services and felt the platform for delivery would be difficult to be successful. Commissioner Green commented that it was not clear whether this activity required a specialized trainer, and whether the trainer had experience working with children. Mr. Rodriguez noted that this proposal is a systems-change project. Commissioner Sigmond stated that this is an exciting project, and that families will benefit from mental well-being services. She also said that she liked the fact that the agency will be working in collaboration with other agencies. The motion carried with 3 in favor, 1 opposed (K.Sigmond), and 1 abstention (R.Castillo).

A motion to invite the Imperial County Office of Education was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Green. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the funds are part of a match to upgrade a new playground in order to meet compliance. Commissioner Green commented that the amount they are requesting from the Commission for a new playground is very minimal. Having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

A motion not to invite the Imperial Valley Food Bank was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Green. Commissioner Green said her concern with this project was whether they are targeting children 0 to 5 or a broader age group in general. She also added that there are video campaigns already offered by the federal food campaign. Commissioner Deol stated that the agency would have difficulty monitoring who is watching the videos. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the Commission has had issues with the Food Bank when it came to collecting information on the 0 to 5 population. Having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

A motion to invite the Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program was made by Commissioner Castillo and it was seconded by Commissioner Sigmond; having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

A motion not to invite the Spread the Love Charity was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Green. Commissioner Green said that she wished the agency had more experience in dealing with the targeted population, she stated that Niland and the slabs is a difficult area to recruit and work with. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the agency did not indicate what specialized training they have, or what curriculum they propose to use. Commissioner Deol commented that not much is known about the agency, whether they can offer literacy services. Having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

A motion to invite the University of California Desert Research and Extension Center was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol. Commissioner Sigmond commented that nutrition education and hands-on activities are very beneficial for the children, as well as the parents. Commissioner Deol agrees that the nutrition services are important for the young children, and hopefully Covid regulations will be less restrictive. Having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

Mr. Rodriguez advised that he would send notices to all agencies, and that he will post the guidelines and documents for those who are invited to submit an application under Step 2 of the mini-grant process. Deadline to submit the complete application is May 10<sup>th</sup>.

2. Request to approve the Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines FY 2021-2022 Step 2: Mr. Rodriguez presented the mini-grant guidelines, these were included in the packet. He reviewed the proposed mini-grant timetable. Mr. Rodriguez also sought input from Commissioners regarding the submittal process. He is asking Commissioners whether they prefer the agencies submit 1 original and no additional copies, he will need to change the language in the guidelines, or whether they should leave the submittal of the copies as it has been which is 1 original plus 10 copies. The consensus of Commissioners was to request just one original from the agencies. If Commissioners encounter issues with the emailed copy to them, they can contact Mr. Rodriguez to request the printed documents.

Commissioner Green made a motion approving the Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines, requesting only one original application to be scanned and sent to Commissioners, seconded by Commissioner Deol; having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

He, again, reminded Commissioners that the amount designated to fund mini-grants is \$150,000, leaving \$50,000 for a second round of mini-grants.

3. Request to Approve General Grant Agreement for Services of Independent Contractor for FY 2021-2022: Mr. Rodriguez sought approval of the contracts that will be used for contracting services with the major grants that will receive an additional year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Agencies will have the option of accepting a third year of funding or declining funding. The contracts will be effective July 1, 2021 up through June 30, 2022.

A motion to approve the Agreement for Services of Independent Contractor for FY 2021-2022 was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol; having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

4. Request to Approve the 2020 Early Care and Education Workforce Study: Mr. Rodriguez advised that the ECE Workforce Study is complete and is seeking approval from the Commission. He further added that the information from the study will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. The document will also be made available for other agencies. Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the workforce study.

A motion was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Green approving the 2020 Early Care and Education Workforce Study. Commissioner Sigmond wished to thank Mr. Rodriguez and staff for their development of the workforce study. She addressed the education component, linking the colleges and universities toward supporting the ECE workforce, including a bilingual component. Having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

5. Request to Approve First 5 California Annual Report 2019-2020: Commissioners received copies of the First 5 California Annual Report, and they discussed the county highlight section of the report. Commissioner Sigmond mentioned the summary of the HIPPY Project by the Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program was well written. A motion was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol approving the First 5 California Annual Report 2019-2020; having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.
6. PACES Stipend Application FY 2020-2021: Mr. Rodriguez sought input from Commissioners regarding the PACES application, he provided a summary of the current requirements and he further noted that 23 individuals have picked-up applications with a deadline to submit of July 31, 2021. Mr. Rodriguez commented that the stipend was created as a result of the ECE Workforce Study that was conducted in 2007. As of 2007, 709 stipend awards have been provided to individuals, noting some duplicates. A total funding of \$396,820 has been allocated into the community through this stipend. Mr. Rodriguez also noted that there has been an increase from A.A. and B.A. degrees significantly since 2007.

The following options were discussed:

Option 1: Keep the current stipend award at \$500; earn 9 units; individuals must work in a childcare setting – no changes.

Option 2: Increase the stipend award to \$1,000; earn 9 units; all other requirements stay the same.

Option 3: Establish a 3-Tier System. Award \$500 for 6 units, \$750 for 9 units, and \$1,000 for 12 units.

Option 4: Increase the stipend award to \$750; use the remaining balance to provide students enrolled in ECE career \$500 to help cover costs associated with tuition, books, and other expenses. These students will not be required to be working in an ECE setting.

At this time, Commissioner Green commented that San Diego State University, Calexico Campus, would be opening a program in early care and education starting in the Spring, the Global Program. She is recommending that more money be awarded because SDSU will be very expensive. Further discussion ensued about the proposed program, and Mr. Rodriguez advised that he would seek further information about the program to get a better idea of how the Commission can support the students.

Commissioner Kim is recommending that they move forward with the increase to \$1,000 now and when more information is available about the program at SDSU that they review the stipend guidelines, with the intent of supporting the students.

A motion approving Option 2 was made by Commissioner Kim and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol noting that guidelines may be modified once further information is received. Mr. Rodriguez stated that he will update the PACES stipend guidelines to address the increase and bring it back to the Commission for approval. Having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

7. Second Quarter Progress Reports FY 2020-2021: Mr. Rodriguez advised that a total of ten major grant projects were awarded under the regular RFP process and five mini-grant projects were funded for FY 2020- 2021. The Projects are required to submit reports on services and activities on a quarterly basis, for this quarter the reports were due on January 15, 2021. Mr. Rodriguez noted that all but one project submitted their report which was the El Centro Regional Medical Center Child Asthma Project. He advised that the project staff, who are respiratory staff, have been moved into emergency roles within the hospital due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the project has not provided asthma services, nor have they billed the Commission. Mr. Rodriguez further added that he has met with the Project Supervisor who indicated that they would resume their services as soon as the environment changes.

Overall major grantee expenses totaled 39% for this quarter, and min-grant expenses totaled 33% of expenses. Direct services during this quarter were provided to 2,229 children, parents, and caregivers. The majority of services were provided in El Centro, Brawley, and Calexico.

8. First 5 Strategic Plan Update: Mr. Rodriguez advised that with the completion of the workforce study, the Strategic Plan will be updated, and a draft will be brought for the June meeting. At that time Commissioners may approve of changes to the plan or approve without changes or updates.

## **VII. Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Castillo wished to commend Mr. Rodriguez and staff for doing a good job in light of the challenges that we faced with the pandemic.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

A motion adjourning the meeting was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Castillo; the meeting was adjourned at 5:28 pm. The next meeting is scheduled on June 3, 2021.