



Imperial County Children and Families First Commission

MINUTES

Meeting of February 4, 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
Barbara Deol
Becky Green
Joong Kim
Fred Miramontes
Veronica E. Rodriguez
Karla Sigmond

Commissioners Absent:

- Danila Vargas
Ray Castillo

Staff:

- Julio C. Rodriguez
Bea Duran

III. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

IV. Adoption of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Miramontes and seconded by Commissioner Green to adopt the Minutes of the Meeting held on December 3, 2020; 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 Rodriguez 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. Request to Approve the Community Development Mini-Grant Application: Mr. Rodriguez stated that during the last meeting Commissioners asked him to come up with scenarios for the release of mini-grants so that they could choose from and release into the community. He provided a brief overview of the current Community Development Mini-Grant process. Mr. Rodriguez further added that the general allocation has always been \$100,000; however, last year the amount was increased to \$150,000. The maximum award is \$25,000 each and the Commission may fund 4 to 8 projects. Mr. Rodriguez proceeded to provide an overview of four mini-grant scenarios.

Scenario A: To continue with the Community Development Mini-Grant process that is currently in place, which is a two-step process. Set aside \$150,000 and the maximum award for mini-grants would be \$25,000; deadline to submit the application, Step 2, would be May 10th and final determination of awards would be June 3rd.

Scenario B: Increase the allocation total to \$200,000 at \$25,000 per application or the Commission may decide to increase the maximum award to \$30,000. This scenario would follow the same process and timeline as described in scenario A, a two-step process.

Scenario C: Like scenario B continue with the mini-grant process as proposed; however, this scenario provides two rounds of mini-grants. The first round would include an award allocation of \$200,000. After the June 3rd determination of awards, if the Commission doesn't exhaust the full allocation and if enough funds are left over the balance can be designated for a special targeted mini-grant. Round two would require that grantees only submit an application thus eliminates the Statement of Interest. This would be a targeted initiative whereby Commissioners would select a priority. This mini-grant process would be released June 7th with a deadline for July 10th. A Special meeting of the Commission would be scheduled in August or projects can be selected at a Regular meeting held in September. Grantees would enter a 9 to 10 month contract ending on June 30, 2022. To select a priority, Commissioners may be surveyed, they may make recommendations based on data provided, or they can do both.

Scenario D: Change the format of the process, not use 2 step process, and eliminate the Statement of Interest. Allocate \$150,000 total and indicate a specific initiative or general application. If a specific initiative is chosen by the Commission, a new mini-grant application will need to be drafted. Release as in the previous timetable, and enter into a 12-month contract. As in Scenario C, Commissioners may be surveyed, they may make recommendations based on data provided, or they can do both. This will cause more work both for Commissioners and grantees.

Commissioner Green sought clarification at this time regarding previous discussions they held regarding the release of the mini-grant. She feels it would be best to hold-off from making a decision at this time based on the uncertainty of the circumstances due to the coronavirus. She expressed concern of having to "lock" money into a very specific initiative fearing uneventful issues may arise.

Commissioner Kim advised that he would like to put the money out into the community now and discuss at a later time whether additional funds can be secured for a special initiative. He agrees with Scenario C as was explained, releasing the mini-grant.

After further discussion, the general consensus of the Commissioners was to release a mini-grant application at this time but also liking the idea of establishing a 2nd round of applications.

Mr. Rodriguez advised that the Commission would want to ensure that there is money for a 2nd round; therefore, he recommends allocating \$150,000 for the first mini-grant initiative and leaving \$50,000 to be carried over to the next round. Clarifying also that the Commission had time to decide on the 2nd round of mini-grant applications. Commissioners could decide on the release date and what specific target is intended.

A motion to release the Community Development Mini-Grant based on Scenario C recommendations with an allocation of \$150,000 was made by Commissioner Rodriguez and it was seconded by Commissioner Camacho; having noted no further discussion, the motion passed with all in favor.

2. 2020 Early Care and Education Workforce Study: Mr. Rodriguez advised that the Early Care and Education Workforce Study is nearly completed, a copy of the draft form was included in the packet. He anticipates that the final draft will be completed in mid-February. He noted that the purpose of the study is to generate an analysis of the workforce characteristics related to two groups in the early care and education workforce in Imperial County which are the family childcare homes and the center-based programs. Three major areas relevant to the profession were assessed: childcare characteristics,

educational characteristics, and demographic or other information. Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the following:

- Total surveys collected were 171 from family childcare homes which were most of the childcare homes that remained open during this time and 47 center-based programs.
- Data indicates that there is still a lot of room for capacity. Of a combined 4,261 slots that were available, 68.5% were utilized. Family childcare homes provided significantly more care for children than center-based programs. This was due to the fact the family childcare homes were open throughout the coronavirus pandemic, and the center-based programs were closed and slowly began to open as the pandemic continued. Data from the previous 2005 ECE Workforce Study indicated that center-based programs were at 90% capacity at that time versus the family childcare homes which were at 64% capacity, which was somewhat different in 2020.
- Children 0-5 are the majority of children being served particularly in center-based programs where the proportion is about 99%, some centers also serve children 6 and older. Compared to the 2005 workforce study, that data didn't shift a whole lot.
- Data collected on the tools that are considered part of quality improvement efforts such as CLASS, the Environmental Rating Scale, developmental profile, developmental screenings using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire indicate that the center-based programs are using a lot of these tools at a significantly higher proportion compared to family childcare homes.
- Data from the 2005 workforce study showed that 8.1% of family childcare home providers had either an AA, BA or post-graduate degree. Current data shows that this number has increased to 26%. Center-based programs accounted for about 46% of their staff in 2005, current data shows an increase of about 11%. The overall total is significantly higher than educational attainment for the County in general.
- There were also a significant number of foreign degrees. Family childcare providers account for the overall majority.
- Staff in center-based programs received more specialized training such as special needs or working with English Language Learners.
- Information collected regarding the institutions of higher education attended by individuals indicate that a significant number attended Imperial Valley College, followed by Union Institute and University of California, Riverside.
- The average age of a family childcare provider was 51, and in center-based programs the average age of workers was 46. Combined, the average age is 48 which is 3 years higher than in the results shown in the 2005 workforce study. The median age is also higher.
- The ethnic breakdown in the family childcare homes indicate that 98.2% were Hispanic, 1.2% were White non-Hispanic, and .6% Native American. In the center-based programs there were 71.1% Hispanic, 10.2% White non-Hispanic, 0.4% African American, and 18.4% were reported as Unknown.
- Language spoken by family childcare homes indicate that 73.1% spoke combined English/Spanish, 77% at center-based programs.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that the recommendations based on the study, the data acquired, and looking at trends will be built on expanding the capacity workforce, increasing support in the education settings, and expanding support to include classroom Assistants, as well as other identified needs assessments. Part of the recommendations will include identifying concerns such as technology and strategies to address the age gap and/or professional development in the era of COVID-19. Mr. Rodriguez also noted that the Commission may consider doing an assessment of Family, Friend or Neighbor (FFN) exempt care providers. This is a group of individuals who also provide care to children in an informal setting. Commissioners provided input on this sector of providers and expressed that this is something that may be further explored.

3. PACES and Professional Development Applications: Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the Professional Advancement for Childhood Educators Stipend (PACES) which is a \$500 stipend designed for individuals in the early care and education workforce who are enrolled in an institution of higher education, who acquire 9 units and meet additional requirements. Deadline to submit the application is July 31, 2021. Applications are distributed through the IMPACT Program and are available on a first-come first-served basis. Mr. Rodriguez provided further clarification on the qualifying applicants.

Commissioner Sigmond inquired about the stipend amount; given the high costs associated with attending colleges and increasing expenses, she would like to recommend increasing the amount of the stipend whether this is something that can be done this year or the next. Commissioner Green agreed with the recommendation and commented about the high costs of textbooks. Further discussion ensued about an increase in the stipend or increasing the number of applications that are disbursed. Commissioners expressed their interest in re-visiting this issue; Mr. Rodriguez advised that he would put together information regarding the stipend and this issue will be brought back for discussion at the April meeting.

Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the Professional Development Contribution and Support Application which is a \$5,000 capacity building grant available to agencies. This application supports those wishing to attain specialized training and most costs associated with it, it also supports grant-writing trainings. The application is available throughout the fiscal year and is available on the Commission's website under the Funding Opportunities section.

4. First 5 Grantee 2nd Quarter FY 2020-2021 Update: Mr. Rodriguez provided an update of the 2nd Quarter Progress Reports. Reports from grantees were due on January 15th. The information collected from grantees through their data collection tools, evaluation charts, narrative reports and budget reports are being cross-checked for accuracy. One of the highlights that Mr. Rodriguez noted was that grantees are becoming more versed in trying to provide services in this coronavirus environment, noting that some grantees had experienced difficulties the previous year during the third and fourth quarters. He advised that things are moving better.

Mr. Rodriguez also indicated that copies of the First Quarter Progress Reports were emailed to Commissioners as part of this meeting packet.

5. Form 700 – 2021 Statement of Economic Interest: Commissioners were reminded that the Form 700 Statement of Economic Interest is due April 1st to the County Registrars. Commissioners may provide their form directly to the County Registrar by the deadline, with a copy to the Commission office or may submit their originals to the Commission office attention Bea Duran.

VII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Kim wished everyone to be safe.

Commissioner Sigmond thanked Mr. Rodriguez and Commission staff for their hard work, especially in putting together the Early Care and Education Workforce Study.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion adjourning the meeting was made by Commissioner Miramontes and it was seconded by Commissioner Green; the meeting was adjourned at 4:34 pm. The next meeting is scheduled on April 8, 2021.