



Imperial County Children and Families First Commission
MINUTES
Meeting of April 7, 2022

I. Call to Order

This Regular Meeting of First 5 Imperial was called to order by Karla Sigmond, Chairperson, at 3:39 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:
Fred Miramontes
Veronica Rodriguez
Danila Vargas

Staff:
Julio C. Rodriguez
Bea Duran

III. Public Comment

No public comments were noted.

IV. Adoption of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Deol and seconded by Commissioner Green adopting the Minutes of the Meeting held on February 3, 2022; 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 to approve was made by Commissioner Deol and seconded by Commissioner Green; 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 Select Community Development Mini-Grant Statements of Interest to Apply for FY 2022-2023: Mr. Rodriguez provided a register of the Statements of Interest that were received and moved to ensure that any Commissioner conflicts of interest were disclosed before discussion of the Statements of Interest to Apply.

At this time, the following conflicts of interest were declared:

- Commissioner Green - Imperial Valley College Developmental Preschool
Commissioner Sigmond - Imperial Valley College Developmental Preschool

Commissioners Green and Sigmond will “mute” their devices during discussion of the Imperial Valley College Development Preschool Statement of Interest to Apply and were asked not to comment on this issue at any time.

Mr. Rodriguez identified the Statements of Interest that were received in response to the Community Development Mini-Grant:

- Heber Elementary School District – Proyecto LISTOS
- Imperial County Office of Education - Early Start Inclusion Program for Special Education
- Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council – Little Steps
- Imperial Public Library – Little Hands Say Big Words
- Imperial Valley College Developmental Preschool – Outdoor Community Concert
- Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program – Project CARE
- UC Desert Research and Extension Center – Farm to Preschool Festival

Commissioners agreed to review and decide on each Statement individually, and the following discussion ensued to which action was taken.

Heber Elementary School District: Proyecto Literacy, Interventions, School Readiness, and TK Opportunities and Support intends to provide an early intervention parenting program that will target incoming Transitional Kindergarten students at Heber Elementary School District. The district plans to serve 40 families, 60% of the families. The program will offer 25 weekly lessons of instruction to parents and will focus on targeting high needs families which includes children with special needs. An issue may be that this would be the first time the district offers this program, though a strength identified is that the program will conduct home visitations, and leverage school funds for this project. Commissioner Deol commented that she was concerned whether the school district would be able to keep the parents engaged for 25 weeks.

A motion to invite the Heber Elementary School District to submit a mini-grant application was made by Commissioner Green and seconded by Commissioner Deol and having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

Imperial County Office of Education: The Early Start Inclusion Program for Special Education proposes to continue supporting their inclusion model program targeting moderate to severe children with disabilities. Children will work in a classroom setting with other peers under the direction of the teacher, and lesson plans for parents will be created. The project will also provide staff development and training to support the integration of special education students into the classrooms. Potential strengths identified were that children with special needs will receive an inclusive setting environment; the staff trainings are evidence-based; and the focus is on children with special needs. A weakness identified is that this program will only be offered at two preschools. Mr. Rodriguez added that the Commission generally funds a major grant in support of this program; however, the agency missed the deadline to submit the RFP.

A motion to invite the Imperial County Office of Education to submit a mini-grant application was made by Commissioner Green and seconded by Commissioner Deol and having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council: The Little Steps project is proposing to offer parenting classes to 125 parents using the Incredible Years curriculum. The parent trainings are offered using age-appropriate components; are available in English/Spanish; are held within a span of 4 to 8 weeks, depending on the age of the child or if the parent is court-ordered to attend. A weakness identified is that the CAP Council has been depending on funding for the Commission to fund this project over several years.

A motion to invite the Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council to submit a mini-grant application was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Green and having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

Imperial Public Library: The Little Hands Say Big Words project proposes to facilitate activities to teach expectant parents and families how to teach their children to communicate using American Sign Language (ASL). The program will be to enhance services related to a grant being implemented by the library called "SPROUT". This program will support learning opportunities for young children and strengthen families, and intends to also support children with autism. The project indicated that they have a dedicated space within the library for children; and staff will be receiving ASL training. Mr. Rodriguez noted that this is an interesting concept, and the library is not asking for much funding; he also advised that this priority does not fall under the Commission's Strategic Plan. He further indicated that there is no research that clearly supports the benefit of children signing; however, there is anecdotal information showing the benefits of communicating in sign language with children. Commissioner Green stated that Imperial Valley College has offered baby sign language to parents, and it is very easy for parents to pick up on. She is recommending that the Imperial Public Library explore this option.

A motion to invite the Imperial Public Library to submit a mini-grant application was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol and having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

At this time, it was noted that Commissioner Sigmond and Commissioner Green abstained from discussion and muted their devices.

Imperial Valley College Developmental Preschool: The Outdoor Community Concert program will provide parents a creative learning opportunity in a concert format. Concert activities will encourage motor development and physical activity in children as well as providing health education for families. Families have been limited in general to activities due to Covid-19, and this concert program proposes to engage families in a fun activity. The program promotes school readiness in children and brings parents back to engage in community settings. The Statement was not clear if this is a one-time event or if it is ongoing, and it does not indicate how many families they will target. Commissioner Deol stated the funding may be too much for a one-time event.

A motion to invite the Imperial Valley College Developmental Preschool to submit a mini-grant application was made by Commissioner Kim and it was seconded by Commissioner Castillo; having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried (Favor-Castillo, Kim, Deol, Camacho; Abstain-Sigmond, Green; Noes-0).

Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program: Project CARE is an enhancement to the HIPPY Program offered through the Project Nenes major grant. The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youth (HIPPY) supports the school readiness of children by providing thirty weekly lessons of instruction to develop literacy, language and communication, math, science and physical development in children. The project proposes to serve an additional 10 to 15 new children who are not already attending preschool. Mr. Rodriguez to realize the mini-grant services identified depends on funding of the major RFP grant which the Commission is currently considering.

A motion to invite the Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program to submit a mini-grant was made by Commissioner Kim and it was seconded by Commissioner Castillo and having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

UC Desert Research and Extension Center: The Farm to Preschool Festival plans to offer a one-time event that will target children 0-5, caregivers, parents and ECE providers. The goal of the festival is to influence healthy eating habits in young children, and healthy living habits. The project plans to partner up with other programs for that day including Farm Start and Cal-Fresh, as well as engage various community organizations. The agency had an event last year and there was a concern noted over transportation.

A motion to invite the UC Desert Research and Extension Center to submit a mini-grant application was made by Commissioner Green and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol. Commissioner Deol would like to encourage the agency to invite 4H students and the Boys and Girls Clubs. Having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

Commissioner Sigmond is requesting that all Commissioners receive a notice of the date the event will take place and is encouraging Commissioners to attend.

2. Request to Approve the Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines Step 2: At this time, Mr. Rodriguez sought approval to release the Mini-Grant Guidelines, Step 2. These guidelines will be provided to the agencies that were invited to submit applications as part of Step 2. Mr. Rodriguez further added that \$150,000 was allocated for the mini-grant projects, with a maximum funding award of \$25,000 each. He estimates the Commission should be able to fund seven mini-grant projects. The deadline to submit mini-grant applications is set for May 12, 2022, and Commissioners will meet on June 2<sup>nd</sup> to make a final selection of projects.

Mr. Rodriguez also identified minor changes being recommended to update the guidelines and asked if Commissioners wanted to receive hard copies of the applications or if they should be sent by email. By consensus, mini-grant applications will be sent by email and hard-copies will be provided upon request.

A motion was made by Commissioner Green, and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol, to approve the release of the Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines Step 2; having noted no further discussion, the motion passed with all in favor.

3. Request to Approve the First 5 California Annual Report FY 2020-2021: Mr. Rodriguez provided copies of the Annual Report and explained that all county Commissions are asked to review and

approve of the annual report as an annual requirement. He noted that the California Children and Families Act of 1998 requires all county Commissions to approve of the First 5 Annual Report. He provided a summary of the contents of the annual report which included a review of the sections in the annual report and proceeded to highlight the profile for Imperial County in the report that emphasized the services provided by the Court Appointed Special Advocates of Imperial County.

Commissioner Green made a motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol, to approve the First 5 California Annual Report FY 2020-2021; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

4. Request For Proposal for General Grant FY 2022-2025 Update: Mr. Rodriguez advised that nine Letters of Intent to Apply were received in response to the RFP for General Grant. Of those, only eight applications were received. He stated that the Brawley Public Library did not submit an application; he noted that the decision, as conveyed by the Brawley Public Librarian, not to apply for the LAMBS Project was made by the Brawley City Manager. The El Centro Regional Medical Center did not submit their application for asthma services; he stated that no services had been provided by the project during the past two years because of issues related to COVID-19, and therefore that may be the reason for not reapplying. The Imperial County Office of Education Special Inclusion Initiative did not submit an application because they did not meet the deadline date. The Calexico Neighborhood House submitted a Statement but did not submit an application; although it seems like the NHC had another project in mind. Mr. Rodriguez said that he wished that the Commission had received more applications but added that they should move forward with the process anyway. He further remarked on the possibility that if enough funds were left over perhaps the Commission could look into doing another initiative.

Mr. Rodriguez also stated that he met with the evaluation team and went over the details for the review process, he provided rubrics, contracts, time sheets, etc. and paired up the teams. The RFP applications were recently sent to the evaluators.

Applications, along with rubrics, will be provided to Commissioners within the next few days in preparation for review for the May 19<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting. He will also provide a summary of the applications that were received and will forward those to Commissioners.

## **VII. Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Deol shared that she will be returning to her academic studies in pursuit of a doctorate, and advises she is scheduled to complete the program in Spring 2026.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

A motion adjourning the meeting was made by Commissioner Sigmond and the meeting was adjourned at 4:24 pm.