



Imperial County Children and Families First Commission
MINUTES
Meeting of April 4, 2024

I. Call to Order

This Regular Meeting of First 5 Imperial was called to order by the Commissioners present at 3:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the First 5 Imperial Training Center, at 1240 State Street, El Centro, CA.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

Barbara Deol
Michael Kelley
Joong Kim
Fred Miramontes
Karla Sigmond

Commissioners Absent:

Yurii Camacho
Rebecca Green
Paula Llanas
Danila Vargas

Staff:

Julio C. Rodriguez
Fernando Valenzuela

III. Public Comment

No public comments were noted.

IV. Adoption of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Deol and seconded by Commissioner Miramontes to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 1, 2024 and having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

V. Consent Calendar Items

The consent calendar items consisted of the monthly financial reports for January 2024. A motion was made by Commissioner Deol and seconded by Commissioner Kelley to approve the consent calendar items was made and everyone noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

VI. Special Presentations

1. Project Video Highlight – I.C. Sheriff’s Activities League Child ID Program and UC Desert Research Center, U-Pick Event:

Mr. Ben Dorantes, the media consultant working for the Commission, provided a special presentation to the Commission on some of the current video projects of First 5 Imperial funded partners. He noted that he uses his technology to show what the Commission and agencies funded by the Commission are doing, as it is important to tell the story. He proceeded to show the Commission a number of media files for a variety of funded programs for this fiscal year. He noted that interviews are conducted specifically to capture services and tell a story. Then he proceeded to show a video created to illustrate how the Child ID Program, that is funded through the Imperial County Sheriff’s Activities League, works in the community which included an interview with Officer Aide Flores-Gallegos, where she works through an explanation of what the

Child ID Program offers families with children 0-5 years of age in the Community. Commissioner Kelley commented on how it is a dynamic idea to capture this information and important to show the community of how the funding is being used in the County and asked how we get this information out to the Community. Mr. Dorantes explained that the videos are posted on the website, in addition to loaded onto the First 5 Imperial social media platforms, such as Facebook. He also noted that the videos are available for use by grantees and other agencies, which are the real engines that may drive the dissemination of this information, as they have the motivation to share the video. Commissioner Miramontes noted that it was a good idea to do this type of work and to connect it to other social platforms to be shared. Mr. Dorantes affirmed that that is exactly how it is used, and that people share this information through the First 5 website, Facebook or other social media, as well as parents that share the information particularly if their child or other family member participates in the process, as they like to see their children in these videos.

The Mr. Dorantes then presented a video of the UC Desert Research and Extension Center that entailed a special event connected to the Preschool Fall Festival event funded by the Commission, where he captured images and video of a separate vegetable U-pick activity at the Center's facility in Holtville. Mr. Dorantes highlighted that this video uses photo imagery and footage from a drone used at the event to capture the story behind the activity which is specifically set to music to create the effect of a happy event unfolding. Once the video ended, he noted that the video was shared with UC Davis, and that they were very excited about the footage, and immediately posted it on their social media, and used the pictures for other activities as well. He stated that this is a good example of engagement, and a way to get parents involved in the process. He highlighted the importance for getting people from the community involved in these videos and to support them, and how to try to capture the impact and how it reverts to First 5 Imperial and the importance of these services. He noted that many other videos are available on the Commission's Facebook account, such as ECE provider interviews, the car seat event, and he particularly noted the Stepping Stones Project from the City of El Centro. He asked the Commission if they would like to see the video, of which they acknowledged interest in viewing the video. This footage consisted of physical fitness and sports related activities which requires parental engagement with participant children at the Martin Luther King Jr. Pavilion in El Centro, and narrated by the Community Services Worker for the Project. Once the video was over, Mr. Dorantes noted that he also always asks parents for consent before he takes and picture or video, and gets that information in writing. Commissioner Sigmond thanked him for sharing the videos and affirmed that they were important, and other Commission members agreed and thanked him for the presentation.

VII. Administrative Report

1. Request to Approve Community Development Mini-Grant Statements of Interest to Apply for FY 2024-2025:

Mr. Rodriguez, the Executive Director from First 5 Imperial, started addressing the request for Commission members to approve individual Statement of Interest to Apply forms that are part of the Community Development Mini-Grant process for FY 24-25, and suggested that Commissioners proceed in the manner that was been the standard practice in the past, by reviewing each statement them moving forward individually to approve or not approve to invite the agency submitting the Statement of Interest under consideration to submit a complete mini-grant under Step 2 of the process. He then proceeded to hand out a copy of the Register of Statements of Interest to apply,

and that copies of the mini-grant applications were available on their computers. Then he emphasized that before they discuss any applications Commissioners would be asked to disclose any conflicts of interest if there are any. He individually asked each Commissioner present if they had any conflicts, and noting no conflicts of interest, he began by introducing the first applicant, the Stepping Stones Project submitted by the City of El Centro. He proceeded to provide a summary of the Statement of Interest. Commissioner Kelley asked if this is related to the services that were presented in the video. Mr. Rodriguez noted that they had received \$22,000 previously for those services. He explained the 3 objectives of the proposed project. He then asked Commission members if they would want to review all of the applications first or move to decide on whether to invite after review of each application. Commissioner Deol suggested that they move to invite after discussing the individual application, and Commissioner Kelley agreed to decide on the City of El Centro application. Commissioner Sigmond asked for a motion, and then Commissioner Miramontes moved to approve to invite the City of El Centro to submit a Step 2 application, Commissioner Deol noted that she had questions, though would second the motion. She then noted that she likes the overall scope of the project, though asked about having tennis and track activities for small children. Mr. Rodriguez explained that they do activities that are age appropriate, that for example, the equipment used for tennis are light rackets and foam balls with small, mobile courts, and they reserve the Pavilion for a time where only small children are allowed to participate with their families. They have adopted a specific, age-appropriate curriculum. Commissioner Kelley commented that it is important for children to engage in physical activity, and also he appreciates that their parents are involved with them. Commissioner Deol then noted that she remembered when her kids were that age that they really enjoyed physical activities, like soccer, but was just curious about how they engage in those other activities. Commissioner Sigmond asked for a vote, and the motion passed with all in favor.

Next Mr. Rodriguez presented the Little Steps application submitted by the Imperial County Child Abuse Prevention Council, which is a targeted intensive parent education program utilizing the Incredible Years curriculum, which addresses three age-appropriate phases. He noted that they would also be using the First 5 CA Kits for New Parents, and a family literacy fun kit. This application is similar to one submitted by the agency in the past, and to show the impact of these services they use the pre-post survey created by Incredible Years. The agency will be targeting parents that have children 0-5 years of age that are deemed as being at-risk. Commissioner Kelley then made a motion to approve inviting the CAP Council on to Step 2. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes, and having noted no further discussion the motion carried with all in favor.

Mr. Rodriguez then noted that the next application was from the Imperial County Office of Education for an Early Learning Conference. He explained that the intention of the proposal is to host a local conference for early care and education providers so that many, who may not be able to attend a similar event outside of the area, would have access to a conference locally. Commissioner Kelley asked how much the Office of Education would save by hosting the event. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the agency identified that it would cover a proportion of the costs, and it was not clear how much the actual event would cost. He said that the request that was being asked included information relevant only to the cost for 60 providers and the speakers contracted for the event, and that it was not clear how much hosting the conference would actually cost. Commissioner Kelley commented that it would appear that the agency has this type of event as part of their mission and would fall under their internal budget. Mr. Rodriguez noted that that is a good question, because the agency should have funds allocated for professional development, though also noted that one of the most significant aspects of this request is that they were trying to focus on including a number of family childcare providers, which generally are not included in these types of activities, which would be

meaningful because support for these types of providers in areas such as working with children with special needs may have a positive impact. Commissioner Deol inquired if the event would be scheduled on a weekend, where Mr. Rodriguez noted that that would be the most feasible option because if they do want to attract providers that generally don't have access to these types of activities, then a weekend event is beneficial. He also provided feedback on previous conferences that have been offered that were similar, though it would be important to ensure the conference presentations are relevant. Commissioner Sigmond asked what would be his recommendation? He noted that he would recommend funding, though to ensure how expenses are identified for the event, and to contract with individuals that are versed in current early care and education topics. Commissioner Deol then moved to invite the County Office of Education to submit a mini-grant proposal under Step 2 of the process. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes, and having noted no further discussion the motion carried with all in favor.

Mr. Rodriguez presented the second application submitted by the Imperial County Office of Education, for which the focus of the proposal would be providing professional development to their early care and education coaching staff. He indicated that he would not recommend this application for funding, namely because the Commission currently has a major grant that is funded through the Office of Education that offer coaching to childcare providers. Commissioner Kelley asked how much the Commission was currently funding, and Mr. Rodriguez noted that the award was over 240,000 dollars for training for their internal programs, though the Commission only provides funding for the coaches not for professional development, but they should have funding for some capacity building available through other resources. Commissioner Sigmond then asked for a motion, and the motion was made by Commissioner Deol to not invite the County Office of Education to submit a Step 2 application, and it was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes, and having noted no further discussion the motion carried with all in favor.

The next application for consideration presented by Mr. Rodriguez was from the Imperial Valley Life Center. Commissioner Kelley ask what the organization submitting the request does, where Mr. Rodriguez clarified that it is a nonprofit organization that provides services to families that are at risk, it is fairly new and targets families with newborns and offers parenting classes. The agency is asking for two computers for the purpose of helping families, particularly those with no support or resources and may be homeless with access to applying for basic needs. Commissioner Miramontes asked who oversees these services. Mr. Rodriguez noted the Director for the center and that it is a 501c3, and that it is a nonprofit. If they are invited to step two then the agency would have to provide additional information. Commissioner Kelley commented that he likes what they were proposing to do, that if an invitation is made they can work to meet other requirements, and then address who oversees them and how they offer services, their background and where they intend to go with these types of serves. Commissioner Miramontes inquired if they have applied for funding before? Mr. Rodriguez noted that they have not, though once they submit a complete application then the Commission may have a better idea of who they are. Commissioner Deol made a motion to invite the Imperial Valley Life Center to submit a complete mini-grant proposal, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. She then commented if that they are proposing to offer services primarily to homeless families, then if there is a way the agency could partner with Social Services for assistance with filling out paperwork since people may not know where to go? Mr. Rodriguez agreed that that is something that should be addressed, in addition to working with other agencies, such as Intercare, the MediCal Managed Care Plan or Behavioral Health. Ms. Sigmond agreed, stating that these services are important and could work to really support families that have no idea what is out there. Then she asked for a vote if there was no further discussion. The motion carried with all in favor.

Mr. Rodriguez then introduced the next application, Project CARE from IVROP. He noted that this project was a home visitation program in line with the HIPPY home instruction program that is currently funded by the Commission, and that it would be an expansion of these services by up to 15 families. Services include 30 weeks of home instruction, parent group meetings and developmental screening services. Commissioner Kelley noted that this was a good program, and he proceeded to make a motion to approve inviting the agency to submit a complete mini-grant proposal. Commissioner Sigmond noted that the program was highlighted in the First 5 CA Annual Report and that they offer these services to family, friends and neighbor providers which is a difficult population to reach. She clarified Commissioner Kelley's motion, and Commissioner Deol then seconded the motion and with no further comment the motion carried with all in favor.

The Serving Seeley Youth Statement of Interest from the Seeley Union School District was presented by Mr. Rodriguez, which is a project that proposes to invite children 0-5 years of age from the school district's catchment area and invite them to the school, where they would receive literacy materials and participate in activities. He noted that the same proposal was submitted the previous year, and Commissioner Kelley stated that they did not say how many children they proposed to serve. Mr. Rodriguez stated that the application offered very little information on what was being offered to families. Commissioner Deol commented on the fact that there were no objectives or activities listed. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the proposal only stated that children would be invited to participate in literacy activities, and describing nothing about what these activities are, and that a school district should be able to submit a statement with more detail and this is thought out, as professionals and educators work for the district. Commissioner Miramontes asked if there was a preschool in the area or other services. Mr. Rodriguez noted that there is one across the street from the Elementary School, and the County Library used to have a site there, though it is not clear if the school is engaged with these agencies, as the County Library does offer child literacy programs and therefore could provide one there. He then noted that he would recommend not to fund. Commissioner Kelley agreed that they need to provide more information on what they are proposing, and then Commissioner Deol made a motion not to invite the Seeley Union School District to submit a mini-grant, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. After no further discussion the motion carried with all in favor.

Next Mr. Rodriguez introduced the *Caminando de la Mano* Project submitted by the SURE Helpline Center, stating that it is a parenting program, that is a continuation of the project funded during the previous mini-grant cycle. They have adopted a curriculum, which is Family Hui. He noted that the target population is not clear, that the Statements identified specific at-risk populations, though there is a need to clarify if services are for the general public, or for victims of domestic violence. Commissioner Sigmond noted that it would be important to clarify this and given that it is a parenting program they could benefit families that are victims of domestic violence but would need to be able to recruit them as well. Commissioner Deol agreed and noted that discipline and skills like that are important, in addition to the fact that the services are similar to those offered by the CAP Council and asked if they would be serving the same families. Commissioner Sigmond noted that they were similar, though the target population is specific, whereas the CAP Council is offering parenting to the general public. Commissioner Deol stated that since it was not clear as to the target population it seemed like a similar program. Mr. Rodriguez agreed, and stated the importance of clearing this up, such as clearing up if services would only target specific at-risk families or if they would be more general, and if so then they would have to serve more families. Fernando Valenzuela, Compliance Coordinator for the Commission, ask if he could make a comment, and noted that the Project does not address offering parenting classes to families that speak English and that currently

only families that speak Spanish are being offered services which is something that should be considered. Commission members agreed that this would be important. Mr. Rodriguez noted that Family Hui has a new curriculum that the SURE Helpline can use and the organization that created the curriculum could also offer resources. Commissioner Deol asked if the CAP Council does offer Family Hui. Mr. Valenzuela noted that these agencies use two different curriculums, that the CAP Council uses *Incredible Year* and is offered for different parenting programs with respect to child age groups. Commissioner Deol then made a motion to invite, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. Noting no further discussion the motion carried with all in favor.

Commissioner Kelley asked how much was allocated for funding, and Mr. Rodriguez affirmed that \$150,000 has been allocated. Commissioner Kelley then noted that agencies at this point were asking for more than that, were Mr. Rodriguez stated that the Commission could still invite these agencies and that no final determinations have been made at this time. He then proceeded to introduce the final application from the UC Desert Research and Extension Center, which is a similar project proposed as that from the prior funding cycle. Commissioner Kelley noted that this was a good project and that he would move to invite and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Kim, and having not further discussion the motion carried with all in favor.

2. Request to Approve Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines FY 2024-2025 Step 2:

Commissioner Sigmond introduced the request to approve the mini-grant guidelines, and Mr. Rodriguez provided an overview of the Step 2 mini-grant application guidelines. He emphasized the requirements for the mini-grant application under Step 2, and the changes to the mini-grant application, which included primarily the elimination of the requirement to include a plan for addressing COVID 19. He also highlighted the requirements for specific narrative of no more than six pages, the copy of the agency audit or if the agency is new a copy of their financial records. Only one copy of the mini-grant application is required and the application must be submitted to the County Purchasing Department by the deadline with no post marks. Once the application is received by the Commission staff will develop a summary of the application, highlighting some strengths and weaknesses, including recommendations on changes to the program or budget modifications for funding that the Commission may consider. He noted that the proposals are due by May 8th, 2024. Commissioner Deol underscored some corrections or changes to the mini-grant application, emphasizing language used on page 52 of the packet of the application and noting the last bullet of that related to the types of service models. Mr. Rodriguez confirmed that the item would be changed. Ms. Sigmond then asked if there were any other changes.

A motion to approve the Community Development Mini-Grant Guidelines for FY 2024-2025 with noted changes was made by Commissioner Deol, and it was seconded by Commissioner Kelley, and having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

3. Requesting Approval of the First Five California Annual Report FY 2022-2023:

Commissioner Sigmond introduced the request for approval of the annual report. Then Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the report, noting that it is a requirement for County Commissions to approve the First 5 CA annual report. He provided a breakdown of how the report is structured. He stated that information provided by the Counties to First 5 California is aggregated into the report, in addition to each county highlighting a specific program. In this case the highlight for Imperial County consisted of the home visitation program through IVROP that provides 30 weeks of home instruction through these visits, and specifically targeting family, friends and neighbor (FFN) exempt care providers. He then went over the areas where First 5 California highlights their

programs, such as the IMPACT program, Kits for New Parents, media campaigns, and the Talk, Read and Sign campaign. He then asked the Commission for approval of the report.

A motion to approve the First 5 Annual Report FY 2022-2023 was made by Commissioner Miramontes, and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol; having noted no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

4. Request Approval of the First 5 Imperial Plan on Implementation of Procedures on Internal Controls:
Mr. Rodriguez provided a summary of the Plan on the Implementation of the Procedures on Internal Controls. He noted that this plan had already been presented to the Commission for discussion, and that the only changes to the plan related to the timeline. He also stated that staff had already been authorized by the Commission to retain accounting services from Allied Business Services and were working to ensure that this would be in effect and consistent with the Plan. He emphasized that this is a process that does take some time because Allied Business Services accounting staff have to become familiar with the County System and how the Commission processes claims for payments internally and through the County. Commissioner Deol noted a correction to the plan, on the first page of the procedure. Mr. Rodriguez note the correction.

A motion to approve the Plan on Implementation of Procedures on Internal Controls was made by Commissioner Deol and it was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes; having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor and no opposition.

5. Request to Approve Releasing FY 2023-2024 1st and 2nd Quarter Payments for the Imperial County Free Library:
Mr. Rodriguez affirmed that the Commission currently has a contract with the Imperial County Library, and Commissioner Kelley recused himself from the discussion due to a conflict of interest. Mr. Rodriguez informed members that a request was being made to approve the release of two payments that are pending for the Imperial County Free Library, which are the first and second quarter payments for the current fiscal year. The Commission is withholding payments due to non-compliance issues related to the submittal of the FY 2021-2022 and FY 2022-2023 audit reporting requirements that have not been met. He noted that that because of non-compliance the Commission has been withholding payment, which include the final 5% withheld pending the audit report in the amount of \$4,849.00, and the first 2 payments for the current fiscal year totaling \$87,294. Commissioner Miramontes then asked if the County Library is that far behind, of which Mr. Rodriguez noted that they were behind significantly on meeting the audit requirements due to their inability to have an audit completed and not providing clear answers to the Commission. One of the things that will be asked of them is for clarification on when these reports will be completed and this will be submitted in writing. The issue is that communication between the Library and the Commission has been incomplete and therefore should be specifically laid out to answer the issues reasonably. The problem for the Commission is that payments have been held now for a while, and the problem for the County Library is that they have been providing services without reimbursement, though we do not want them to operate in the red with a negative cash balance. This is why it is important to issue these payments, and he noted that he had this discussion also with staff from the CEO's office and assured them that payments would be made, but that the Commission needs to be assured that the audit requirements will be met. He also stated that for FY 2022-2023 there is no money being withheld due to the fact that the County Library did not expend a significant amount of funds that year, of which the Commission did have to request a refund of the unspent balance of just over \$3,338. Commissioner Sigmond then asked if there was a motion to approve of the request.

A motion to approve releasing the first and second quarter payments for FY 2023-2024 for the County Library was made by Commissioner Miramontes and it was seconded by Commissioner Deol; having noted no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor and no opposition.

6. First 5 Imperial Updates:

Mr. Rodriguez shared with the Commissioners that staff will want to initiate the process for hiring a new position for front office staff as the plan for reorganizing the Commission is in effect, which was made subsequent to eliminating the Office Supervisor and Fiscal Analyst positions as cost savings measures. Therefore, he noted that staff would be drafting a new job description for the position which would be consistent with a similar position listed with the County of Imperial and would be presenting it to the Commission at the next meeting for consideration. Commissioner Kelley asked if we work with the County Human Resources Department, and Mr. Rodriguez noted that we do ask them for support in this area, though it is minimal due to the fact that the Commission does not fall under the Human Resources Department. Next, he provided an update on specific legislation that is relevant to First 5 Commissions, which included AB 2982 which proposes to set up a 0-3 age work group to provide recommendations on focusing services to the state legislature. The bill would specifically include representation from First 5 Commissions, and one of the concerns is if the bill as written is interpreted as being part of the Children and Families Act then it may have to go to the ballot for voter approval because it reflects a change to the bill, so that will need to be addressed. Commissioner Kelley asked is there was any funding for County Commissions related to this. Mr. Rodriguez noted that there was not, though that due to the decrease in revenue because of the tobacco flavors ban, there is a budget ask request that is being proposed for a one-time \$100,000,000 allocation, though due to the current fiscal condition of the state, this will most likely not be pursued. He also provided an update on the AB 2828 that would allocate DMV revenue from the "Have a Heart, Be A Star" license plate program, where a specific proportion of the revenue will be allocated specifically to First 5 Commissions that become part of the State's injury prevention program. Mr. Rodriguez then provided a reminder that the Commission needed to appoint members to the ad hoc bylaws committee. Therefore, he asked if interested members would let Commissioner Sigmond know, and also advised Commission members that staff would be presenting information on a potential increase in staff salaries at the next Commission meeting. Commissioner Kelley requested that information on continued funding to be presented, and Commissioner Kim noted that it would be important to review the staff retirement plan. Finally, Mr. Rodriguez provided an update on the new eDisclose system for filing Form 700s.

VIII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Kim noted that there was a need in Calexico for providing childcare services for infants and toddlers. That many parents qualify for childcare services for their children that are 3 to 5 years of age, and that there are a number of parents that also have younger children can not get care for them. Therefore, there should be a grant for this because there is no budget for this. Perhaps there could be a grant for this. Mr. Rodriguez noted that may of these families would qualify for subsidized care, and the important thing would be for an agency in Calexico to initiate the process of having a facility that can offer infant and toddler care, and then they may be able to tap into children that are eligible for subsidized care.

IX. Adjournment

Having no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:38 pm. With all in favor.