

First 5 Early Childhood Systems Stabilization Fund: Update and Next Steps

June 2025: First 5 Early Childhood Systems Stabilization Fund

Response to funding and policy shifts impacting critical safety-net services for children ages 0-5 and their families.

Total Fund Amount: \$600,000



\$300,000 in FY25-26



\$200,000 in FY 26-27



\$100,000 in FY27-28

Three-Pronged Approach:

- Donation to Community Foundation of SLO County \$100,000:
Together for SLO County: A Critical Response Fund
 - For non-profits providing essential services
- Request for Proposal: \$150,000
 - Countywide RFP to invest in critical services for children prenatal to age 5 and their families.
- Strategic Investment: \$50,000 for potential First 5 co-investment in collective impact efforts for programs currently facing imminent sustainability challenges.

Community Foundation of San Luis Obispo County: Together for SLO County: A Critical Response Fund

THE *Community*
FOUNDATION
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Together for SLO County:
A CRITICAL RESPONSE FUND



Protecting the services our community cannot afford to lose

Across San Luis Obispo County, nonprofits deliver critical services—food, housing, mental health support, childcare, and healthcare—to residents who would otherwise go without. Right now, these essential services are at risk. Many nonprofits are facing significant, unexpected government funding cuts, with some losing nearly half of their budgets. Immediate support is needed to ensure these vital programs continue serving our community.

Stronger When We Give Together

No donor can fill this gap alone, but together our community can make a real difference. We launched the Together for SLO County Fund initiative to provide rapid, flexible grants to ensure essential services go where they are needed most. **Right now, every gift—large or small—is being doubled through a \$500,000 community match.** This is the power of collective giving: neighbors coming together to protect the safety net that keeps our county strong.

www.cfsloco.org

- October 2025: First 5 Donates \$100,000
- Rapid grants (\$50K–\$150K)
- First 5 Role: Review panel
 - Ensure alignment with 0–5 priorities
- 27 Awards
- \$2,256,080 Awarded

First 5 Stabilization Fund Request for Proposals



**First 5 SLO County Announces
Request for Applications (RFA)
for Stabilization Funding**

APPLY NOW

*This funding opportunity helps
community organizations sustain
vital programs and services... for
families with children prenatal to
age 5... impacted by recent
funding cuts or policy changes.*

Deadline: Friday, December 5th by 5PM
first5slo.org

FIRST 5
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Scan me

- Purpose: Support organizations sustaining essential programs/services for families with children prenatal to age 5 impacted by funding losses or policy shifts.
 - Open to: Nonprofits, public agencies, schools, and school districts serving SLO County families with young children.
 - Funding Available: Up to \$150,000 total; \$5,000–\$50,000 per application
- ✓ Released: Oct 30
 - ✓ Applications Reviewed: Dec 18
 - ✓ Commission Approval: Jan 28
 - ✓ Funding Began: Feb 1

Ad Hoc Review Committee:

Commissioner Patty Clarkson, Lady Freire, Uplift Central Coast, F5 Staff Wendy Wendt and Jason Wells

Stabilization Fund: Request for Proposals



FIRST 5 SLO COUNTY AWARDS \$150,000
TO STABILIZE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

- 12 Applications
- Requesting \$311,700
- Committee recommended funding for nine (9) applicants

Stabilization Fund Awards

Agency Name	Agreement Amount	Funds Support
Womenade SLO	\$5,000	Emergency assistance to families with young children
South County Youth Coalition	\$5,000	Emergency assistance to families with young children
Center for Family Strengthening – Parent Connection	\$25,000	Parent Connection key staff
Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County	\$30,000	Staff and food purchases tied to children's programs
Cuesta College Children's Center	\$10,000	Child care class expansion through purchase of essential classroom furniture and equipment
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of San Luis Obispo County	\$10,000	CASA Volunteer Training Manager's salary/benefits
San Luis Obispo Child Development Resource Center	\$20,000	Trauma-informed therapy and in-class behavioral support for children ages 2-5;
Pregnancy and Parenting Support of San Luis Obispo County	\$20,000	Staff time for bilingual/bicultural family doula/car-seat technicians, Baby Bank supplies
Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County, Inc. (CAPSLO)	\$25,000	SAFE Lead Case Manager time to serve children 0-5 and their families
Total	\$150,000	

Laura Keene, Carsel Consulting Group

Evaluation Team: Grantee Interview Highlights

Stabilization Fund: Evaluation Findings

September 2026



The funds provided breathing room

For most, it **filled a gap** for a bit while they continued to figure out short- and long-term solutions to major funding cuts

Two grantees mentioned that receiving First 5 funding gave them additional **credibility**.

Those who provided money directly to **families** noted the value of giving families some **relief**.



Spotlight: Womenade
established new relationships
with 0-5 providers

The process was smooth, but some would have liked more time

Challenges were few. The process was **easy** and the application was streamlined. The First 5 team was very **responsive**.

It was incredibly helpful for these organizations to be able to fill gaps in a **flexible** way; several talked about how the funds helped them overcome limitations placed on them by other funders.

For some, a **longer timeframe** (9 months to 1 year) would provide even more flexibility, allowing them to manage around other grants and internal planning processes.



Spotlight: Cuesta College bought supplies for a new toddler classroom, an expense not easily covered via other funding sources

Looking ahead, challenges are expected to continue

Organizations are seeing the **needs of families with young children grow** while **organizational resources decline** and they grapple with high levels of **uncertainty**, which makes it difficult to plan ahead and to approach their work strategically.

In addition, scaling up and back based on available resources is creating **inefficiencies**.

A few organizations noted challenges with **increased competition** in this context.



Spotlight: Two grantees also received funding from the Community Foundation, which will continue to fill gaps

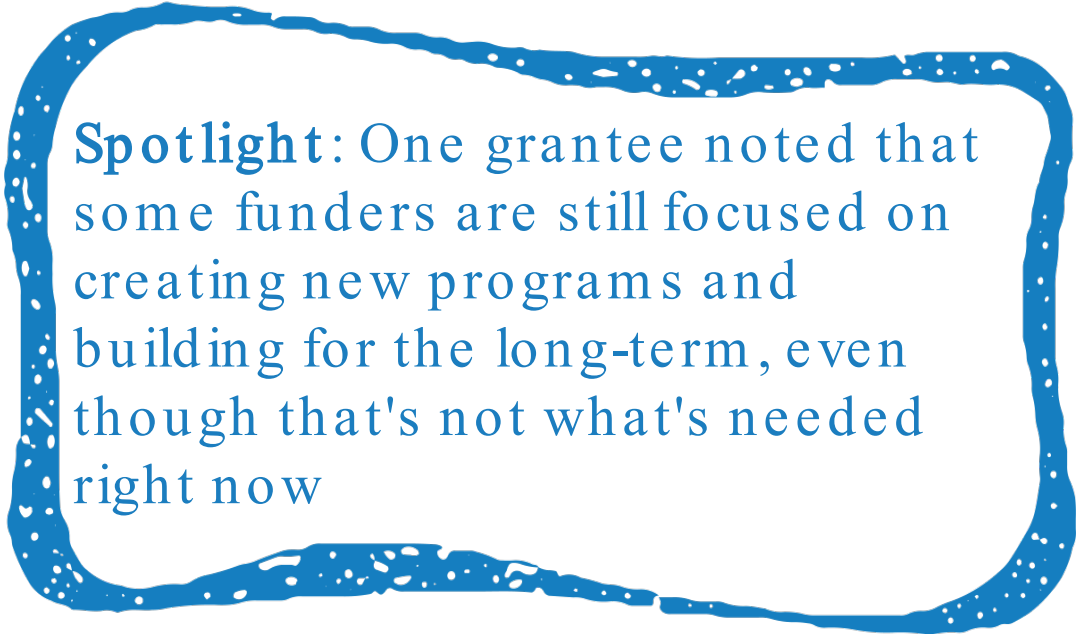
First 5 can support in myriad ways

Provide flexible **funding**

Support network-building and **collaboration** across organizations to leverage varied strengths and resources

Ensure family and organizational **needs** and **solutions remain visible** to decision-makers

Advocate at the state and local level



Spotlight: One grantee noted that some funders are still focused on creating new programs and building for the long-term, even though that's not what's needed right now

Discuss Year 2 Funding Options (\$200,000)

OPTION A:

Return to Original grantees and invite them to submit a letter of interest and an updated needs statement for an ad hoc committee to review and consider continued funding.

OPTION B:

Repeat the original process by releasing a new Request for Applications countywide following the same or similar design used in FY25-26.

OPTION C:

First 5 co-investment in collective impact effort/s to support sustainability for programs/initiatives that provide vital resources or services, and which are currently facing imminent challenges and/or are addressing current systemic disruptions or weaknesses.

Any combination of the A, B, or C

Next Steps

- Questions/Discussion?
- Direction to staff...
- First 5 Staff return in October with detailed plan to deploy Year 2 funding