

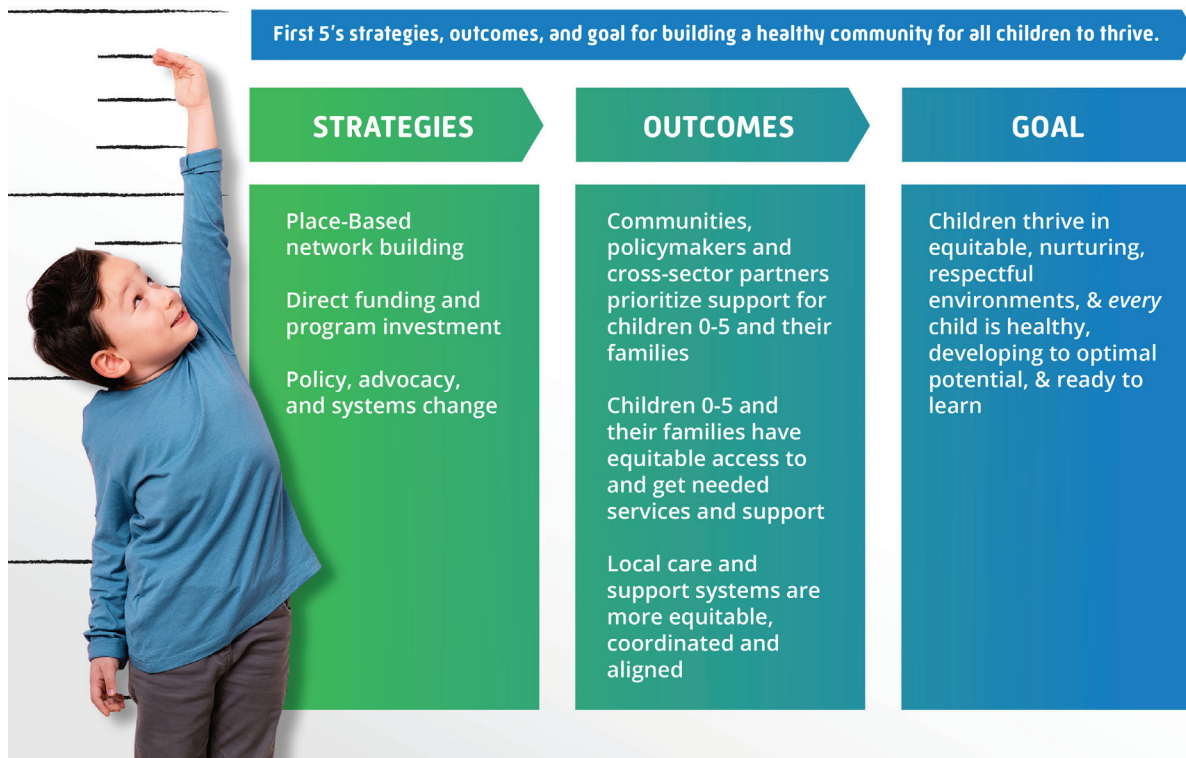


FIRST 5 THEORY OF CHANGE

In order for San Luis Obispo County to have healthier communities, a strong local economy and improved quality of life for all, children need to thrive in equitable, nurturing, respectful environments where every child is healthy, developing to optimal potential, and ready to learn. First 5 San Luis Obispo County uses three key strategies to help reach this goal: Place-based Network Building, Direct Funding and Program Investment, and Policy, Advocacy and Systems Change.



THEORY OF CHANGE - OVERVIEW



PLACE-BASED NETWORK BUILDING:

Leveraging the collective power of our communities

Place-based network building refers to cross-sector efforts that engage community members and partners to address common issues by forging relationships that can be leveraged over time. San Luis Obispo County has the collective power to identify problems and work together to address them. By connecting with and listening to families, aligning with organizational partners and leading the charge on cross-sector collaboration, First 5 is creating innovative ways to deliver services and a more nimble, cohesive and sustainable approach to care and support for young children and families.

DIRECT FUNDING AND PROGRAM INVESTMENT:

Lifting up best practices and take them to scale

Throughout the County, parents and children under six are often unseen or unsupported during the most essential developmental time in a child's life. First 5 funds innovative programs and expands existing resources in order to equitably meet the needs of this key population.

POLICY, ADVOCACY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE:

Ensuring that equitable support for children and families is sustained over time

San Luis Obispo needs sound and equitable public policy and adequate public investment in systems that prioritize children 0-5 and nurture strong, resilient families. The County also needs those systems to be connected, coordinated and aligned in their goals and vision. First 5 supports positive long-term outcomes for communities by advocating for the policies and systems that children and families need. First 5 collaborates with partners in the County, as well as with other regions and statewide First 5 partners in its policy and systems change work.



COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

First 5 works to support all children, and some children and families need extra support – from access to additional resources for housing, transportation and nutrition to ways to address language and other barriers. First 5 is committed to centering equity in the way that it engages and supports diverse community organizations through funding processes. First 5 also works to ensure that the focus of its work addresses the most vulnerable members of the community, including marginalized populations and those who are most impacted by inequities.

HOW FIRST 5 WILL USE THE THEORY OF CHANGE

First 5's cross-sector work in and with communities supports the health and development of children and lays the groundwork for positive long-term outcomes. Investment in early childhood can lead to healthier communities, a more competitive workforce, lower healthcare costs, stronger economic growth and greater equality of opportunity. The Theory of Change is a planning tool to better understand how First 5's capacities and strategies speak to short, medium and longer term outcomes. Each of First 5's initiatives or programs should leverage the core strategies and speak to both short/medium term and longer term outcomes. The Theory of Change is designed to be a living document. As First 5 and its partners learn more about what works, strategies may change and new outcomes may be identified.

The Theory of Change will also guide First 5's ongoing evaluation work. Not all of the Theory of Change needs to be evaluated all at once, and First 5 will work with partners and the evaluation team to prioritize outcomes for evaluation work.

First 5's work supports positive long-term outcomes for our community that we can plan on and build on.



CAPACITIES	STRATEGIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONGER-TERM OUTCOMES	GOAL
<p>STAFF TIME, EXPERTISE & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP: including direct engagement in convening, coordination, coalition building & strategic communications.</p>	<p>Place-Based network building</p> <p>Direct funding and program investment</p> <p>Policy, advocacy, and systems change</p>	<p>Stronger evidence base for needs, gaps, and solutions exists, and best practices are translated for the County in collaboration with partners and the community</p> <p>Proven programs deliver needed services to children 0-5 and their families equitably</p> <p>Emerging or under-addressed issues are identified, including those that emerge from crises</p> <p>Increased media coverage of priority needs, gaps and solutions leads to greater awareness among the community and cross-sector partners</p> <p>New partners are identified, existing partners are activated, and champions and influencers highlighted</p>	<p>Increased cross-sector alignment and awareness on needs and gaps</p> <p>Increased public will to call for action on priority issues</p> <p>Increased political will to take action on priority issues</p> <p>Changes in business practices support 0-5 children and their families</p> <p>Collectively the community and cross-sector partners are able to address emerging or under-addressed issues and crises</p> <p>Policy changes increasingly reflect community-wide 0-5 and their families</p> <p>Needed programs are sustainably supported by public or partner investment</p>	<p>Families' basic needs are met and fewer families face financial insecurity</p> <p>Local care and support systems are more equitable, coordinated and aligned on core functions, and able to provide improved support</p> <p>Equitable, stable, affordable, high-quality supports like child care are available</p> <p>Strong and empowered place-based cross-sector networks that prioritize children 0-5 and their families exist</p> <p>Community and cross-sector partners collectively prioritize and expect support for children 0-5 and their families (norms change)</p> <p>Children 0-5 experience less trauma and improved early education outcomes</p> <p>All employers offer comprehensive family friendly practices that support a healthy work life balance</p>	<p>Children thrive in equitable, nurturing, respectful environments, & every child is healthy, developing to optimal potential, & ready to learn</p>
					<p>LONG-TERM IMPACT</p> <p>Healthier communities, a more competitive workforce, lower healthcare costs, stronger economic growth and greater equality of opportunity</p>

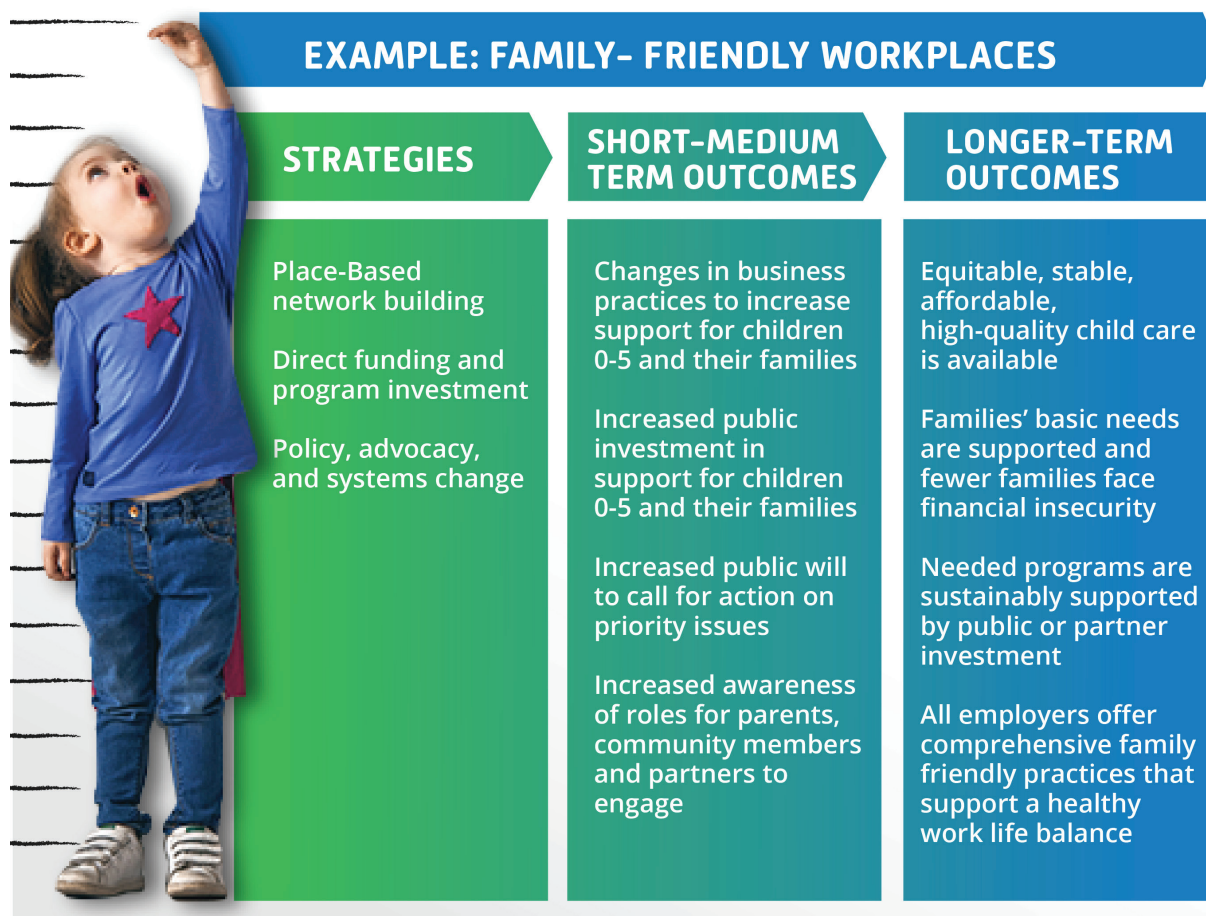
THEORY OF CHANGE IN ACTION: EXAMPLES

The examples below demonstrate how the core strategies used in current programs support First 5's contribution to the short, medium and longer-term outcomes in the Theory of Change.



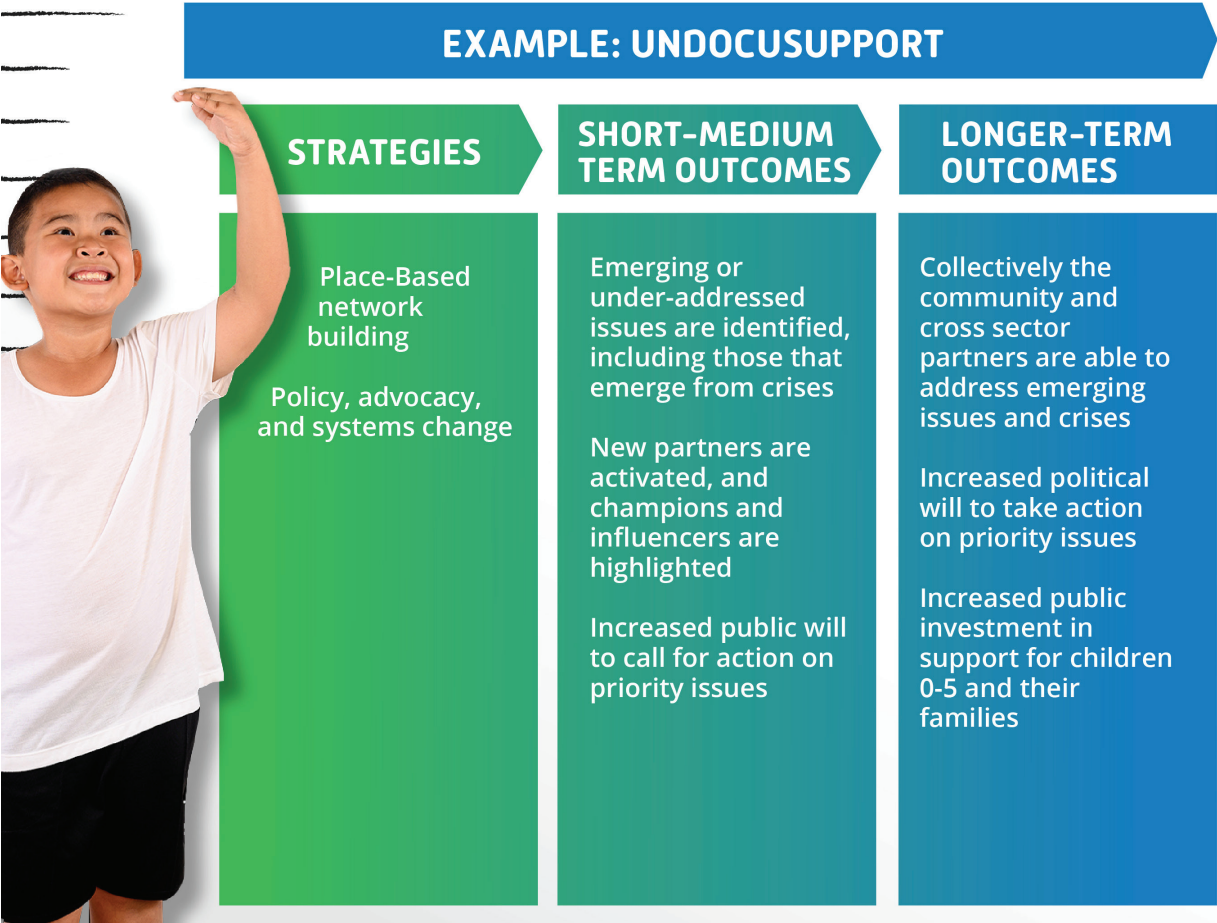
FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

To address the child care crisis in the County, First 5 brings community members and cross-sector partners together through the *We Are the Care* initiative to build support for change and to generate solutions. Thus far, the coalition’s focus on local cross-sector government engagement has successfully raised awareness of the child care crisis in the county as an economic issue and a business issue, as well as an issue for families. Activating practical tools like the Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit has helped lay the groundwork for the development of the Family-Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program, an ongoing partnership between First 5, the County of SLO, and the SLO Chamber of Commerce to support working parents, families, businesses, and a strong local workforce. Initial funding has resulted in community and systems level outcomes, and has also generated new funded programs to help continue the work.



UNDOCUSUPPORT

In order to address the lack of federal pandemic relief dollars allocated to many of the County’s immigrant families, First 5 convened grassroots organizations, community members, and agencies to create a pathway to respond. UndocuSupport expanded SLO’s system-wide capacity to support families in crisis and brought together a new network of aligned community members and organizations ready to support action on immigrant issues.



ORAL HEALTH

In the early 2010s, an assessment by First 5 showed that the 0-5 oral health system in the County was struggling to meet community needs with equitable and quality care, including preventive services. After bringing together a summit of stakeholders at multiple levels to better understand needs and gaps, First 5 made the decision to prioritize oral health. First 5 funded direct services to meet immediate needs, which supported a core provider, Tolosa Children’s Dental, in expanding preventive care into the Central region of the County. Funding also supported work toward changing and improving the children’s oral health safety net system as a whole. A steering committee convened and facilitated the creation of a new strategic plan, informed by the County’s Oral Health Coalition of community leaders, providers and representatives from local agencies. As a result, a permanent oral health program manager was hired to support the County within the Public Health Department with a focus on changing and improving the system over time.

