



January 28, 2021

ACTION ITEM

SUBJECT: DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNER PILOT TIME-ONLY EXTENSION

Strategic Plan Priority Area II: Child Development

Goal: All children birth through age 5 have high-quality, nurturing environments that ensure their learning readiness.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

The purpose of this item is to request a twelve-month, no cost, time-only extension of the Dual Language Learner (DLL) Pilot Study.

In July 2016, the First 5 California (F5CA) Commission approved \$20 million for the DLL Pilot Study to evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of existing early learning, professional development (PD), and family engagement strategies for DLLs in early learning and care (ELC) settings. In 2017, American Institutes for Research (AIR) was selected through a competitive bidding process to serve as the evaluator. AIR's contract is executed through June 2021 to carry out portions of the study.

Due to the COVID-19 health emergency impacting county and state operations, there have been significant delays in executing contracts between F5CA and the 16 counties participating in the DLL Pilot Expansion, the third and final phase of the study. Delays in county contract execution will lead to delay in implementation of DLL Pilot Expansion phase activities. A twelve-month extension will enable counties to fully implement their projects and provide evaluation findings to inform implementing F5CA's Strategic Plan and the recently released *Master Plan for Early Learning and Care: California for All Kids* (Master Plan). The Master Plan report, and a companion knowledge brief, identify support for DLLs as a key priority for California (see <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/master-plan-for-early-learning-and-care/>).

RECOMMENDATION

First 5 California staff recommends the Commission approve a twelve-month, no cost, time-only extension of the DLL Pilot Expansion phase from December 31, 2021, to December 31, 2022.

BACKGROUND OF KEY ISSUES

The DLL Pilot Study Phases

The DLL Pilot Study is centered in 16 counties selected through intentional sampling techniques and implemented in three phases (see Attachment A, DLL Pilot Study Overview). Each phase of the study builds on the other and provides information, fills gaps in research, and informs policy about effective and scalable strategies and the conditions under which they are effective. Reports released by AIR on the first two phases of the DLL Pilot Study are available online (see <https://californiadllstudy.org/>).

The third phase of the study, the DLL Pilot Study Expansion Phase, was designed to address the changing landscape and the disparities for DLLs illuminated by COVID-19's impact on the early learning system, with a focus on educator preparation, learning strategies, and family engagement. Funding from F5CA provides the 16 participating counties (Butte, Calaveras, Contra Costa, Fresno, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Sonoma, Stanislaus, and Yolo) with flexibility to expand existing effective instructional, professional development, family engagement and infrastructure strategies to meet needs in their county and regionally. F5CA's funding requires counties to focus on the most vulnerable DLL children and families, and the most often overlooked and under-engaged providers (family childcare and unlicensed home-based providers) in quality improvement systems. The DLL Expansion projects enable counties to engage in cross-system collaboration to integrate a focus on DLLs more prominently in Quality Counts California educator strategies and workforce preparation, and align DLL messaging, support, and strategies between early childhood and K-12 systems (see Attachment B: Summary of Dual Language Learner Pilot Expansion Phase Projects).

The DLL Pilot Study Expansion Phase evaluation aligns with and builds on emerging findings from the second, in-depth phase, and will focus on: (1) the conditions that support implementation of a range of strategies that have an ultimate goal of supporting DLL children and families, (2) if and how those strategies change systems within and across counties, and (3) the extent to which strategies are scalable and sustainable during and after COVID-19. The proposed expansion phase evaluation activities include review of county workplans; interviews of key informants, county leaders, and DLL families; family and provider surveys and focus groups; and county lead agency and partner convenings (see Attachment C). AIR will collaborate with local evaluators to reduce duplication of effort and leverage existing evaluation work.

In addition, F5CA will facilitate learning communities among county and agency partners and DLL experts in the field to understand local strategies, successes, challenges, and recommendations for scaling up in areas, including, but not limited to:

1. Local efforts to integrate DLL efforts into quality systems (e.g., Quality Counts California, state-led professional development offerings)
2. Identifying and supporting DLL children and families
 - a. Reaching underserved, hard-to-reach families, particularly those affected by loss of services during the COVID-19 pandemic

- b. Strengthening families' role in home language development and cultural pride
 - c. Messaging the importance of dual language competency as an asset
3. Workforce preparation and support
- a. Engaging family child care providers, and unlicensed home-based and community providers
 - b. Culturally sensitive approaches to engaging family, friend, and neighbor providers
 - c. Partnerships with higher education to prepare the workforce to work with DLLs
 - d. Local strategies, successes, challenges, and recommendations for scaling up
4. System strengthening ECE through K-12
- a. Improving support for DLLs to transition from ECE to kindergarten
 - b. Strengthening articulation between the ECE and K-12 systems
 - c. Connecting to English Learner Roadmap Implementation for Systemic Excellence and including more ECE in that work
 - d. Defining kindergarten readiness for DLLs, including identifying appropriate readiness assessments

F5CA is collaborating with Early Edge California and Advancement Project, and seeking a grant from the Emerging Bilingual Collaboration (New Venture Fund), for a skilled facilitator to lead the learning communities. The facilitator will host the culminating event to maximize local connections and document lessons learned to inform statewide and county-level policy.

The goal of this phase of the study is for state leaders and policymakers to learn from the implementing counties about scalable strategies, and for counties to learn from one another to promote success. The findings will inform recommendations in the Master Plan and other policy recommendations for how to better support young DLLs in early learning settings.

Need for Additional Time Due to COVID-related Delays

The expansion phase was designed to be carried out over 18 months, to accommodate ramp-up activities which can take up to six months, and at least a full year to implement activities, learn from one another, and understand what is effective and scalable, particularly given their implementation during COVID-19 recovery. However, due to the continued pandemic, the public health crisis impacted the contracting process and timeline, significantly delaying execution of county contracts. Counties were unable to begin the expansion phase activities, including hiring staff and sub-contracting to carry out the professional development activities without an executed local area agreement

(LAA) in place, which did not occur until mid-January 2021 for most. The current funding authorization for DLL will expire December 31, 2021, providing insufficient time to meet the goals of this phase of funding.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND ACTION

At the October 2020 Commission Meeting, F5CA and AIR staff presented the Commission with an update on the DLL Pilot Study, plans for the expansion phase activities, and how the evaluation is designed to influence policy.

In April 2020, Commissioners approved a six-month, time-only extension of the DLL Pilot Study funding to compensate for the delay in carrying out the study due to the COVID-19 restrictions and implement the expansion phase, authorizing implementation through December 2021.

At the July 2019 Commission Meeting, F5CA staff and AIR presented an update on the progress of the DLL Pilot Study, including presentation of preliminary qualitative findings.

At the July 2016 Commission Meeting, Commissioners approved up to \$20 million for the DLL Pilot Study (Fiscal Years 2016–17 to 2020–21).

FISCAL ANALYSIS

This is a no cost, time-only request. There is no additional fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. DLL Pilot Study Overview
- B. Summary of Dual Language Learner Pilot Expansion Phase Projects
- C. Proposed Evaluation Plan for the DLL Expansion Phase