



January 25, 2024

INFORMATION ACTION

SUBJECT: SMALL POPULATION COUNTY FUNDING AUGMENTATION

Strategic Plan Priority Area 2: Child Development

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

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Since the implementation of Proposition 10 in fiscal year FY 1999–2000, the State Commission has authorized additional funding to small population counties. The statutory funding formula for counties with a small population of births did not provide adequate funds to fully operate a local commission in order to administer effective First 5 programs. First 5 county commissions in small population counties play a crucial role in programming for prenatal to five-year-old populations; without them, children in most of these counties would not have access to essential services. In January 2021, the First 5 California (F5CA) Commission approved an investment of up to \$20 million over 4.25 years, beginning April 1, 2021, through June 30, 2025.

Staff will provide an update on the Small Population County Funding Augmentation (SPCFA) program and discuss the next round of funding.

SPCFA HISTORY

Twenty-one small population counties¹ (SPCs) have received base funding to support county commission activities needed to fulfill the statutory requirements and for Proposition 10 to be a statewide effort that promotes, supports, and improves the early development of children ages 0–5. Eligibility for SPCFA is based on 1,000 or fewer annual births between FY 2017–18 and FY 2018–19. During FY 2022–23, SPCs budgeted \$4,658,817.02 to administer their First 5 county commission and fund programs.

As directed by the Commission, the major focus of the 3.25-year grant (April 1, 2021, through June 30, 2024) is on evaluation activities related to systems change efforts and their intended and actual impacts. The potential for pooled services for the purpose of

improved efficiencies was explored; however, based on the diverse makeup of small counties, it was not a viable option beyond what some of the small counties are already doing.

During FY 2022–2023, SPCs completed the revised version of the systems change tool—a Systems Change Data Map. This tool was developed to build on the First 5 Association’s Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion focus. It included a more explicit focus on equity and the data counties use to help demonstrate the reach and impacts of systems change activities. The Data Map Tool covered four primary areas: (1) a description of the activity involving equity goals, strategies, partners, outcomes, and the number impacted; (2) data sources to identify need; (3) incorporating principles of equity; and (4) outcomes for children and families. Counties were at different stages of adoption of these four primary areas, and F5CA hopes to have counties build on their submission to learn about their progress in fostering cross-sector collaboration and improving outcomes for children and families.

Small population counties are aligning local priorities with Quality Counts California, Help Me Grow, and other statewide efforts. In 2020, Child Trends summarized challenges and accomplishments of small population counties in a report titled [Small Population County Funding Augmentation: County Experiences](http://www.cafc.ca.gov/partners/investments.html), available at (<http://www.cafc.ca.gov/partners/investments.html>).

Equity and Impact Evaluation

SPCFA funding promotes equity by enabling children and families in small population counties to receive essential services. Without the augmentation provided by F5CA, most small population counties would not be able to operate a local First 5 county commission. Many of these commissions play an essential role in funding basic services where none existed before, and overcoming geographic, technological, and resource barriers to help families access necessary services. Small population counties play a crucial role as effective conveners with the ability to bring partners to the table quickly to respond to issues effecting families with children ages birth through 5 years. Each small population county approaches their role differently depending on geography, political influences, staffing, and deep-rooted community and population factors.

UPDATE

It is the current practice of F5CA to collaborate with small population counties and the Association on the development of proposed funding and program requirements for SPCFA. Meetings were held throughout the year in 2023, and in January 2024, with small counties and will continue to have them in 2024.

F5CA is currently working with all 21 counties to improve oversight and support, along with reconciliation and budget change requests, invoicing, and 1-year amendments for the remainder of allocated investment amount of \$20 million over 4.25 years. F5CA is finalizing the technical assistance element to provide support to all the small counties.

Finally, F5CA has made some infrastructure changes for quality improvement and support.

ⁱ Twenty-One Small Counties: Alpine; Amador; Calaveras; Colusa; Del Norte; Glenn; Inyo; Lake; Lassen; Mariposa; Mendocino; Modoc; Mono; Nevada; Plumas; San Benito; Sierra; Siskiyou; Tehama; Trinity; Tuolumne.