



# 2025-2030 Strategic Plan



# Introduction

Fresno County thrives when our children and their families thrive. This plan is grounded in the belief that it takes all of us working together to build a community where every family has the support they deserve. Because **when children are healthy, loved and nurtured, we all thrive.**

# Background

Our earliest relationships and experiences shape the way our brains are built, laying the foundation for all future learning and development. Rooted in this fact, in 1998 California voters passed Proposition 10, increasing the state's tax on tobacco products and creating an initiative called "The Children and Families Act." The legislation established First 5 (the California Children and Families Commission), and it was **charged with implementing an integrated system of services to support the optimal development of children from the prenatal stage to age five**, so they are ready to succeed in school and life. Each California county then formed a local First 5 – and so was born First 5 Fresno County (First 5 Fresno).

For over two decades, First 5 Fresno has invested more than \$548 million to fill gaps in our local service system so that families raising young children have access to the supports they deserve. **As stewards of public funding, we operate primarily "behind-the-scenes"**, working directly with the people, policies, and programs representing the many agencies, organizations, and businesses that, in turn, directly support children and families.



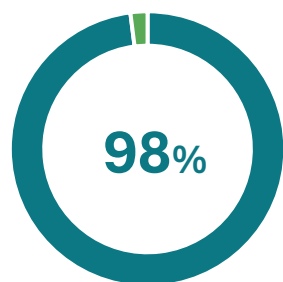
# Background (cont.)

Over the next five years, tobacco consumption is expected to decline by approximately 8%-10% per year. This reality, coupled with the recent passage of Proposition 31 to ban the sales of flavored tobacco products, necessitates alternative revenue strategies to fulfill the vision of a comprehensive, accessible, and collaborative system of services for young children and their families. First 5 Fresno has a strong history of leveraging public and philanthropic funding and we are committed to increasing our capacity to leverage current and new funding opportunities while actively decreasing our reliance on tobacco tax revenues. The reality is that while funding streams change, the need for an equitable early childhood service system remains. **And our families are worthy of nothing less than our collective commitment to transforming the system to work for all.**

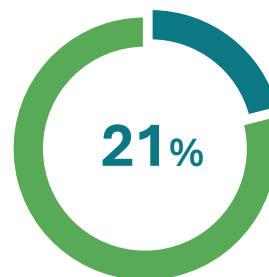


# Fresno County Data Dashboard

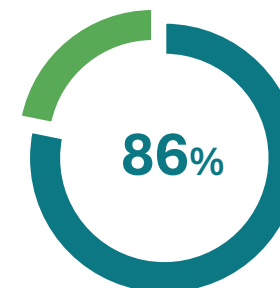
Fresno County is home to more than **88,800 children** ages 0-5 years old



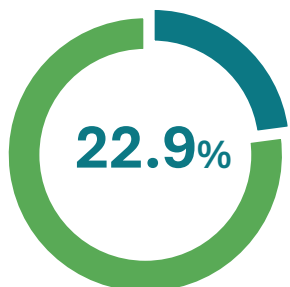
Children with health insurance



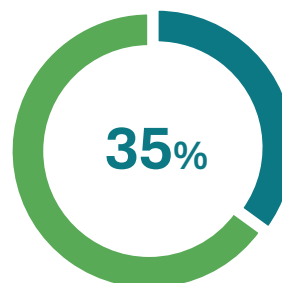
Children with two or more adverse experiences early in life



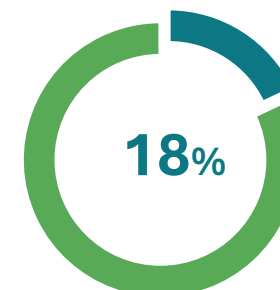
Of pregnant people received prenatal care beginning the first trimester



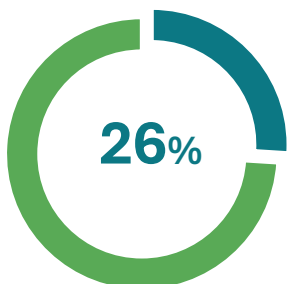
Child food insecurity rate



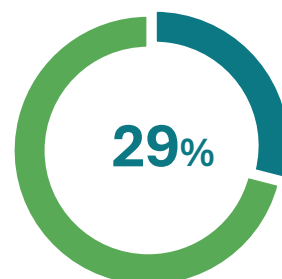
3&4 year-olds enrolled in preschool or transitional kindergarten



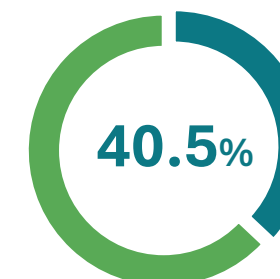
Of children in working families for whom a licensed child care space was available in 2023



Young children living below poverty level



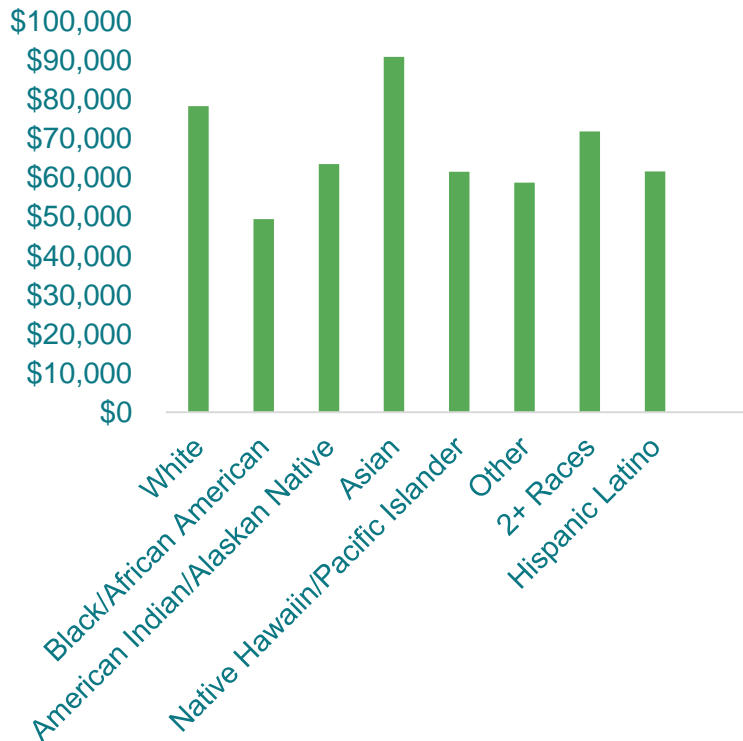
of children enrolled in Medi-Cal had a developmental screening by age 3



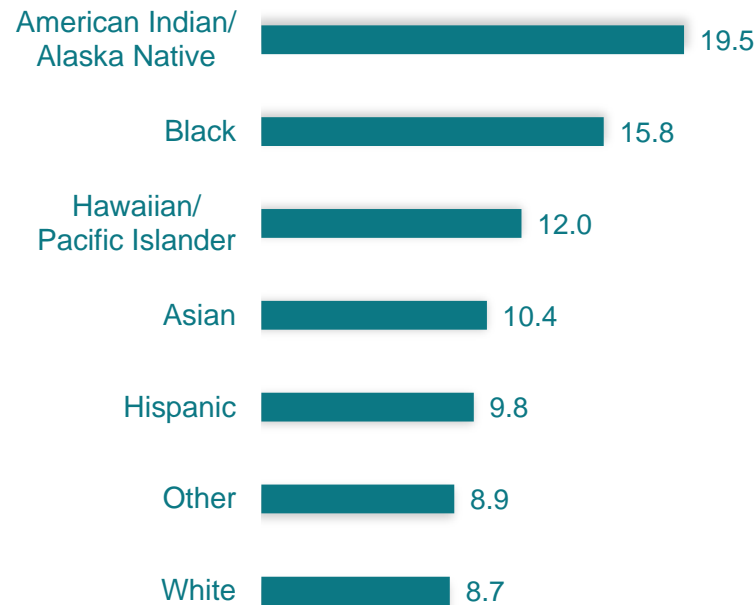
3<sup>rd</sup> graders reading at or exceeding grade level

# Fresno County Data Dashboard (cont.)

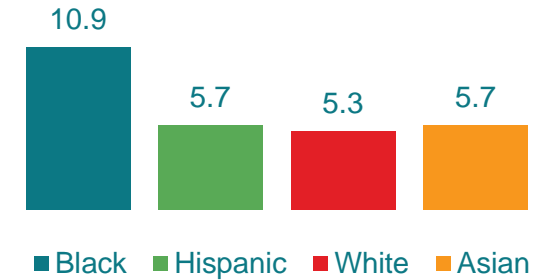
## Median Household Income



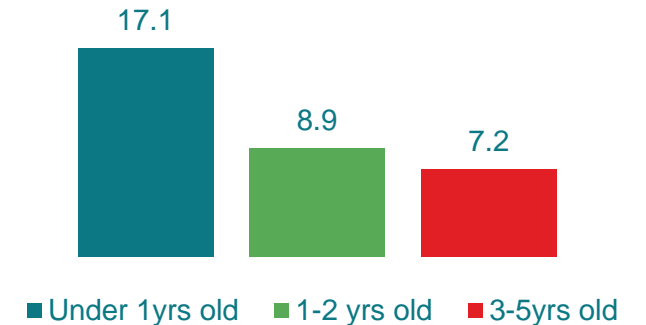
## Preterm Birth Rate



## Infant Mortality Rates per 1,000 Live Births



## Rate of Substantiated Child Abuse per 1,000



# Strategic Plan Development

In recognition of the many strategic plans, community needs assessments and data collection efforts recently concluded or underway in Fresno County, the initial phase of strategic planning focused on reviewing and analyzing existing data related to young children and their families. Staff partnered with Harder+Company Community Research to review a wide range of data sources and reports and identify key challenges facing families with young children in Fresno County. Based on the initial data review process, we developed a draft strategic plan framework to share with the First 5 Fresno Commission and broader community. Through feedback sessions, online surveys and Commission meeting presentations, we gathered input and reflections that directly informed the final version of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.



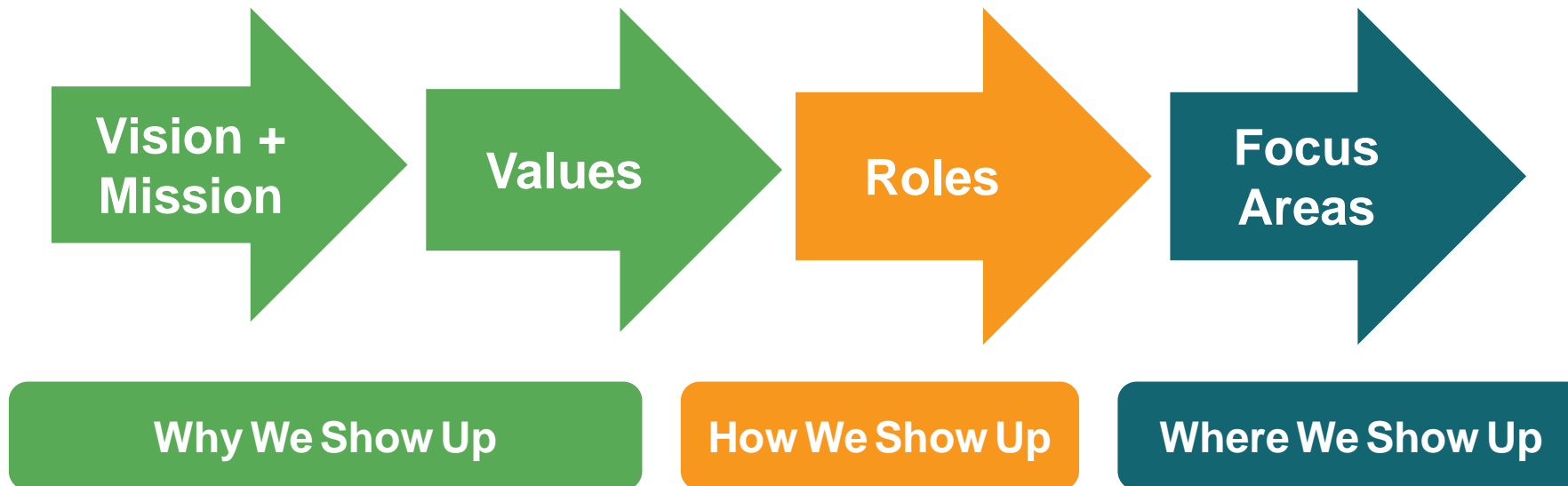
# Commitment to Ongoing Learning and Development

The launch of our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a global crisis with repercussions that were entirely absent from the development of that very plan a year prior. This, among many other learnings has changed the way we approach strategic planning. This new plan will continue to serve as the primary guide for First 5 Fresno investments and actions over the next five years. At the same time, while the development phase of the plan has concluded, we remain committed to ongoing learning, reflection and feedback to ensure we are responsive to the shifting early childhood funding landscape and priorities of families with young children across our community.



# Strategic Plan Framework

This strategic plan is organized by three main sections: **why** we show up, **how** we show up and **where** we show up. Together these represent our vision, mission and values that inform the roles we will take as a First 5 Commission, and our areas of focus over the next five years.



# Vision and Mission

## Vision

We envision a future where young children and their families are healthy, loved and nurtured.

## Mission

We pursue this vision by **partnering** with, **advocating** for and **investing** in our community to create a seamless system of quality, accessible, services that support the well-being of every child and family.

# Values

Every aspect of our work is guided by our underlying beliefs and commitments.

## We Believe

- Relationships are at the heart of strong systems and families
- We are a piece, not the whole of a solution
- Every person has inherent dignity and worth
- Children develop in the context of their families and communities
- Families and communities are the ultimate experts on their needs

## So We Will

- Build intentional, rather than transactional relationships
- Hold ourselves and our partners to the highest standards of quality
- Prioritize sustainable, innovative solutions that build on local strengths and wisdom
- Amplify the voices and needs of families and communities that have been historically underserved
- Be culturally responsive, respectful, honest, inclusive, equitable and ethical

# Roles

At our core, First 5 Fresno is **systems-focused**. We are designed to support the people, policies and programs representing each agency, organization, and business that serves Fresno County families – so we can each make our piece of the system of services work better for families.

Over the years First 5 Fresno has shifted from primarily investing in individual programs like preschools, kindergarten camps, family resource centers, and parenting classes, to increasing our focus on leveraging funding, facilitating crucial conversations with community partners, and elevating the needs of our youngest residents across the public and private sectors.

Given our **unique position as an entity solely focused on supporting families with young children**, we find we are most successful when we show up in the following ways:

## Partner

We bring together, work alongside and cultivate relationships to improve community outcomes through intentional collaboration.

## Advocate

We raise the needs of families with young children in every setting so they are prioritized across diverse agendas and policies.

## Investor

We contract and leverage local, state, federal and philanthropic funds for innovative, data and community informed initiatives and emerging needs when uniquely positioned to do so.





# early matters

## FRESNO

Thriving children. Secure families. Vibrant economy.

## Roles Spotlight:

Taking on the roles of **partner**, **advocate** and **investor**, First 5 Fresno County serves as the backbone agency and lead for Early Matters Fresno, a coalition of early childhood leaders committed to improving the lives of young children and their families. Early Matters Fresno is both an investment portfolio and network connected to the countywide DRIVE (Developing the Region's Inclusive and Vibrant Economy) 10-year economic investment plan.

# Focus Areas

Our scope is broad and the need is vast. Acknowledging First 5 Fresno's available staff time and resources, we will partner, advocate and invest in the following areas over the next five years. We recognize the wide range of opportunities and challenges within each area, and will work with our community and Commission to determine specific activities for each area throughout the life of the strategic plan.

**Maternal, Child  
and Family  
Health**

**Thriving  
Families**

**Early Learning**

# Focus Areas

Each priority serves as a starting place within the broader focus areas.

## Priorities

### Maternal, Child and Family Health

Increase positive birth and health outcomes for Black, Indigenous and communities of color experiencing the highest rates of preterm birth and life-threatening childbirth complications

Increase the number of children receiving recommended developmental screenings and referrals to appropriate supports

Increase access to respectful, quality, and affordable physical and behavioral health care for families with young children

### Thriving Families

Strengthen proven protective factors for families raising young children

### Early Learning

Increase our community's capacity to provide quality, accessible and inclusive early learning and care opportunities for every child and family, across rural and urban neighborhoods

# Lighthouse FOR CHILDREN



## Focus Area Spotlight

The Lighthouse for Children (LFC) facility, located in downtown Fresno, supports families across **all three focus areas**. Founded and owned by First 5 Fresno, the LFC is a centralized hub of initiatives, services, and training spaces supporting young children and their families. Community partners offer families a learning environment where they feel safe, supported, and prioritized. This three-story community building houses a Child Development Center, a Community Learning Center, conferencing, office space for community agencies, and First 5 Fresno County's administrative offices.



# Indicators of Progress

As one piece of the early childhood system in Fresno County, we are dependent on our partners to collectively meet the needs of families and young children. Along with tailored evaluation activities for specific First 5 investments, we will look to community-developed performance measures and local data to track county-level progress on each focus area. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Percentage of children who received a standardized developmental screening
- Infant mortality rates
- Preterm birth rates
- Maternal mortality rates
- Mothers receiving prenatal care
- Families living in poverty
- Substantiated child abuse rates (0-5 population)
- Number of early care and education sites
- Percentage of children attending preschool and transitional kindergarten



# Acknowledgements

We are grateful for each and every one who contributed their time and insight to create this strategic plan. To the families raising young children and the home visitors, community-health workers, nurses, pediatricians, early childhood educators, program staff, administrators, speech therapists, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, neighbors, advocates, and countless others supporting them – your care for one is care for us all.

Thank you.

# Commission and Staff

## First 5 Fresno County Commission

Luis Chavez, Chair

Kari Gilbert, Vice-Chair

Hugo Morales, Secretary/Treasurer

Sabrina Beavers

Susan Holt

Dr. Marcia Sablan

## First 5 Fresno County Staff

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