



Early Childhood Evaluation Advisory Subcommittee

October 6, 2015
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Location: 1700 S. El Camino Real, Suite 405, San Mateo, CA 94402

Committee Members F5SMC Commissioners: Lee Michelson (Chair), Michael Garb, Neel Patel

Staff: Kitty Lopez, Michelle Blakely, Jenifer Clark

Minutes: Jenifer Clark

AGENDA

	Item	Presenter
1.	Agenda Review & Announcements	Michelson
2.	Approval of the April 20, 2015 Early Childhood Evaluation Advisory Subcommittee Meeting Minutes (Attachment 2)	Michelson/All
3.	Updates: Research & Evaluation Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Big Data” Project• Online Grants Management System• Annual Report to First 5 California	Clark
4.	Discussion: Evaluation Purpose and Planning (Attachment 4)	Clark
5.	Next Steps	Michelson/All
6.	Adjourn	Michelson
Next Meeting Date(s): <i>TBD</i>		

FIRST 5 SAN MATEO COUNTY
Early Childhood Evaluation Advisory Subcommittee
MEETING MINUTES
April 20, 2015

PRESENT:

- COMMISSIONERS: Lee Michelson (Chair)
- COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Michael Garb; Neel Patel
- GENERAL MEMBERS: Jim Miller (Pre-3)
- STAFF: Kitty Lopez, Jenifer Clark
- MINUTES: Jenifer Clark

1. Agenda Review/Announcements

The agenda was approved with no changes.

2. Approval of the October 20, 2014 Early Childhood Evaluation Advisory Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved with no changes.

3. Updates: Ongoing Research & Evaluation Activities

The ECEA Subcommittee received updates on ongoing research and evaluation activities, including the Comprehensive Evaluation, the upcoming Big Data Project, and plans to move to an online data system to support programmatic, fiscal, and evaluation reporting. The group discussed the value of the Big Data Project, which will identify one or more pilot communities and link cross-sector service participation data for children ages 0-3 and their families. This will enable a new way for public and non-profit agencies to share information and identify areas for increased systems-level integration and collaboration. F5SMC is working with the Bella Vista Foundation and the Gardner Center at Stanford University on this project.

4. Update: Comprehensive Evaluation RFP for the New Strategic Plan

Jenifer Clark also provided an update on the RFP for Comprehensive Evaluation services which was released on April 3rd. The funding term will cover the first 3 years of the new Strategic Plan, running from July 1, 2015-October 31, 2018. The total funding allotted during this time is \$672,000. Proposals are due on May 1st, 2015, after which they will be reviewed by a panel including F5SMC staff and external experts in the field of evaluation. A recommendation will likely be brought to the Commission at its June 22nd meeting.

5. Discussion: Draft Comprehensive Evaluation Brief Reports

The group reviewed draft evaluation briefs prepared by SRI International. The purpose of the briefs is to replace a single lengthy annual report, by providing more manageable presentations of the data generated through the Comprehensive Evaluation. The group felt that the briefs, although shorter, were still quite technical and would be difficult for most audiences to easily digest. They suggested several revisions to improve the utility of the documents. Several members commented that it may be more efficient to enlist communications professionals to

prepare documents that will be disseminated to the general public or to policy-makers rather than asking researchers to undertake this task, given that their expertise is in data management and analysis, rather than in messaging. That said, there was consensus that the analyses could also be more clearly tied to the F5SMC Strategic Plan and implications for action.

Next Steps

- The group agreed to reconsider the meeting time, and suggested moving it to first thing in the morning or last thing in the afternoon.

Next Meeting Dates:

- June 15, 2015
- October 20, 2015

DATE: October 6, 2015
TO: F5SMC Early Childhood Evaluation Advisory Subcommittee
FROM: Jenifer Clark, Research & Evaluation Specialist
RE: Discussion: Evaluation Purpose & Planning

BACKGROUND

- Prop 10 requires that the activities and investments of County Commissions are evaluated, and that data on clients served, services delivered, and evaluation results are reported to the State each year.
- Prior to 2009, F5SMC met this evaluation mandate by requiring that each funded program allocate a portion of its grant amount towards a program-level evaluation. Programs were free to design and implement whatever type of evaluation they deemed appropriate.
 - This approach to program evaluation led to evaluations of varying scope and rigor. Some programs invested significant resources in hiring external evaluation firms to conduct controlled trials of their services; others provided counts of clients served and customer satisfaction data. This situation made it difficult for F5SMC to compare the efficacy of different service strategies, and impossible for us to derive uniform information about the impact of our funding on children and families.
 - Totaling up the dollars allocated to evaluation activities within each grant, F5SMC spent approximately \$360,000 per year.
- During the 2009-2015 Strategic Plan, F5SMC moved to a Comprehensive Evaluation approach. This type of approach utilizes common data collection tools and common indicators across funded programs.
 - A Request for Proposals process led to the selection of SRI International as the external evaluator. SRI worked with F5SMC staff and grantees to develop a Comprehensive Evaluation including common indicators, data collection tools, and data collection protocols. SRI also developed and managed a database for the F5SMC Comprehensive Evaluation.
 - During the first three-year funding cycle of the 2009-15 Strategic Plan, F5SMC budgeted approximately \$300,000 per year for evaluation services. During the second three-year funding cycle, we budgeted approximately \$250,000 per year.
- During the Strategic Planning process for 2015-2020, the Commission decided to maintain a comprehensive approach to evaluation. Staff released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Comprehensive Evaluation Services in April 2015. The funds allocated for these services totaled \$672,000 over three years (\$224,000 per year).

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION RFP PROCESS

- We received one proposal from SRI International.
- The review committee consisted of F5SMC staff, evaluation staff from F5SMC grantees, and Evaluation Specialists from other Bay Area First 5 County Commissions. After much discussion, the panel recommended that F5SMC conduct an evaluation planning process prior to awarding funds to an external contractor. Goals of the planning process will include:
 - Clarifying the priorities around data collection and evaluation of F5SMC Commissioners, staff, and funded partners
 - Determining how best to leverage other rigorous research and evaluation efforts currently underway (e.g. the Social Innovation Fund evaluation of the Big Lift; the Race to the Top evaluation of Early Learning quality; the F5CA IMPACT evaluation; the Big Data project)
 - Identifying technological solutions that may reduce the resources needed for client-level data collection and database maintenance
- Once the planning process is complete, the agency will be in a better position to move forward with securing vendors for evaluation and/or database services focused on what we aim to achieve with these activities.
- In the interim, require funded programs to collect aggregate data that will allow F5SMC to meet its reporting mandates for First 5 California

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Evaluation data can be used for many purposes. The specific ways in which the information will be used can require different types of data to be collected, as well as different data collection strategies. F5SMC may want to use evaluation data in the following ways:

- **Accountability:** Are F5SMC dollars being spent in accordance with contract and scope of work requirements? Are goals such as number of clients served and services provided met by funded partners?
- **Efficacy:** Are activities supported by Prop 10 dollars effective in attaining their desired outcomes? Are F5SMC investments as a whole achieving the results identified in the Strategic Plan?
- **Program Quality Improvement:** Are there specific aspects of programs that can be improved in identifiable ways that will result in better outcomes for clients?
- **Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation:** Can we identify more effective or efficient services strategies or modalities, or particular client populations that should be prioritized when determining future funding or activities? Can we identify unmet needs within our target population that can be addressed with our resources?
- **Communications:** Can we use the data to communicate with stakeholders about what we do and why it matters?

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

- Common indicators are a valuable resource for needs assessments and communications purposes.
- Collecting the same data across programs serving similar populations through similar service modalities does allow for an examination of which service strategies are most effective for what populations.
- There are some serious drawbacks to relying on the data collection and database maintenance system that we have been using.
 - Data are updated only twice per year, and by the time the data are available they are several months out of date.
 - There is no easy way for those who generate the data (programs) to access the data. They can't query the database, design or pull their own reports, etc.
 - Resources end up being dedicated to data collection and management, rather than data analysis.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING ACTIVITIES

1. Focused conversations with Commissioners, staff, grantees, and other stakeholders to specify how F5SMC evaluation data can add the most value to the Commission and the larger community.
2. Gathering information on other evaluation efforts that F5SMC can leverage in order to better tailor our evaluation activities and make the most of our resources.
3. Exploring the feasibility of linking information from our grantees' existing case management systems as a technological solution to the problem of onerous data collection requirements.
4. The Early Childhood Evaluation Advisory Subcommittee should meet monthly during the planning process to receive regular updates and to provide guidance to staff.