



ADVOCACY AND SYSTEMS BUILDING

**First 5 San Mateo Commission Meeting
January 23, 2017**



FIRST 5
ASSOCIATION
OF CALIFORNIA

Linking Systems Change to Advocacy

§ “Systems change is working with organizations, communities, and public agencies in new ways to change how services and supports are organized and delivered.”

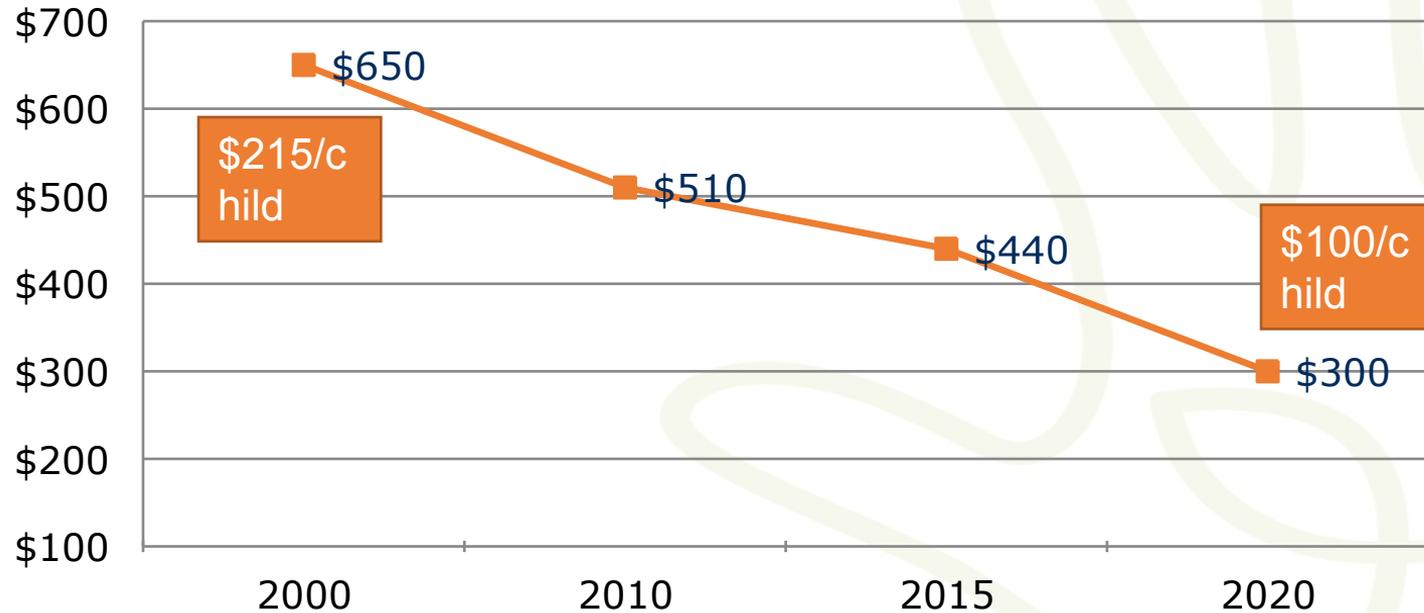
§ Systems Change Outputs

- § Organizations and communities work better together
- § Services and supports delivered more efficiently
- § People’s attitudes and behaviors change
- § New practices to protect families (clients) are enacted
- § Better services and programs are offered

First 5 as a System Building Effort

- § In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10 - 50 cent-tax on cigarettes – to fund early childhood systems in each county (58)
- § First 5 statute calls for Commissions to focus on integrated systems for children 0-5:
 - § Needs assessment and strategic plans
 - § Service innovation / improving access and quality
 - § Evaluation and data
- § Understandably, counties focused on (and were incentivized) to fund direct services
- § Roughly 1 in 4 CA children receives some service, but more light-touch than intensive

The Challenge: First 5 revenue has declined more than 30% since 2000 and CA has not increased investments in early childhood



Difficult Reality: Bringing First 5 to Scale

- § While our programs and services are highly valued, very few, if any, can be considered to be “at scale.”
- § Without scale and spread:
 - § Outcomes are hard to demonstrate at population level
 - § Voter commitment difficult to assume
 - § EC system doesn't exist
- § Luckily, counties are starting the (organizationally and politically) difficult shift towards the systems-building.

- § If we continue to conduct “business as usual” and focus the majority of our spending on individual direct services, we would only be able to help a relatively small number of families and children for a limited time. Working this way is like addressing the problem leaf by leaf instead of curing it at the root.

New Systems Change Activities

§ Legislator education

§ Association engagement – CWDA, CSBA, Head Start Association, ECE Coalition

§ Public / Voter education

§ Child Advocacy Coordination

§ Speaking with one voice vs. Internal fighting

Barriers to Policy Engagement

- § As public agencies, First 5s aren't necessarily ready to take on the policy challenge
 - § Conservative commissions wary about “crossing the line” into advocacy
 - § More progressive commissions don't necessarily have the same needs and have private foundation support
 - § Lots of pressure to continue funding services from grantees and partners
- § Our new job
 - § Coaching everyone to get engaged
 - § Finding new ways to tell our story

The role for local advocacy

- § Policy solutions come from the local level
- § Local constituents (program staff and parents) are more welcome in Sacramento than the usual lobbyists
- § Legislators and administrative officials are curious about First 5's leadership and solutions on key 0-5 challenges.
- § As program investors, we have credibility

Four Steps to Better Advocacy

- § Develop specific policy asks connected to current system needs
- § Reassure (train) EC partners on the rules of the game
- § Develop materials that you want to - and therefore will - use
- § Show up everywhere!

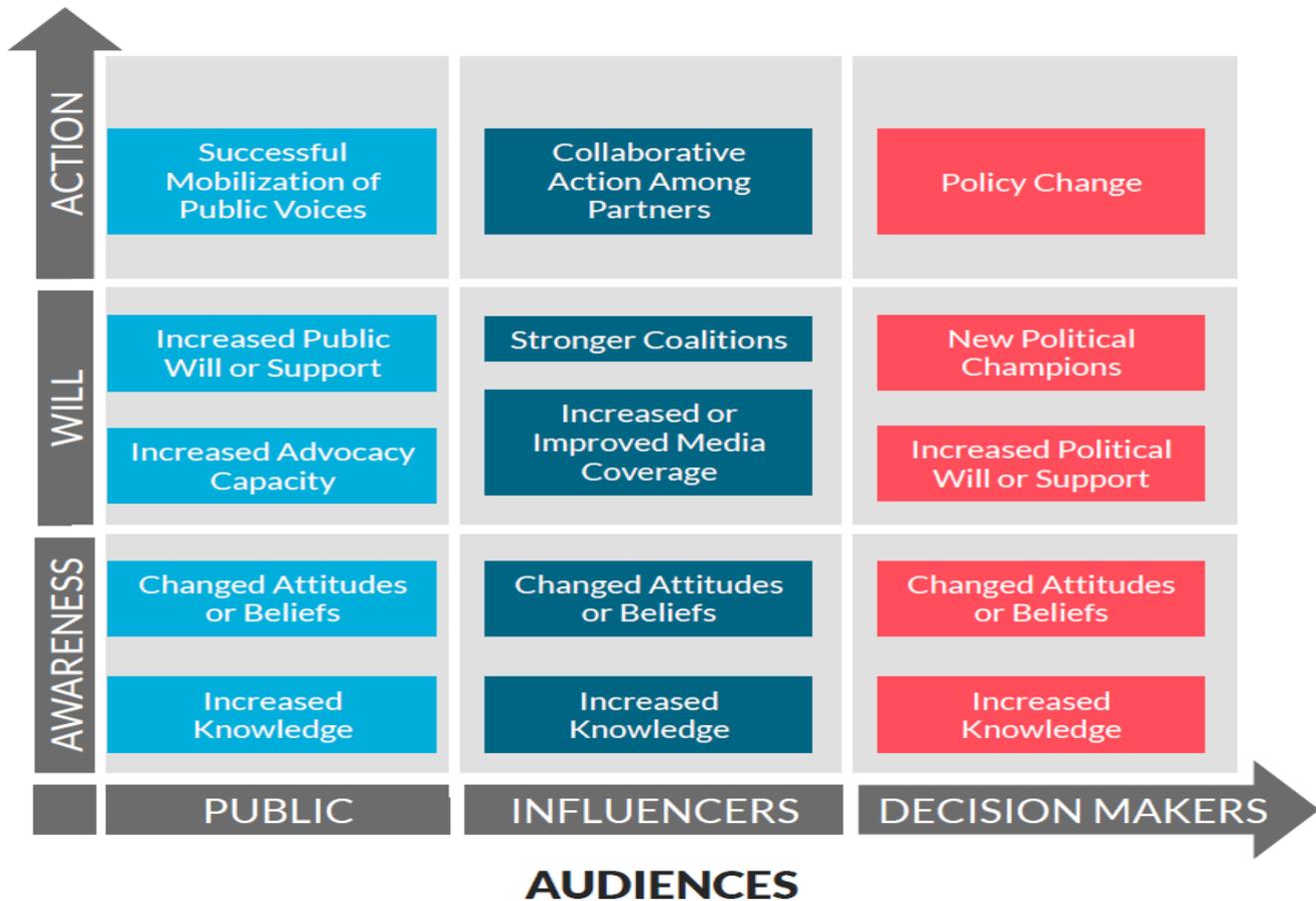
1: Building a Usable Policy Agenda

- § **Based on current investments with evidence of success**
 - § Oral health in Head Start lead to reduced caries in K
 - § Increased ECE workforce development supports higher K readiness levels
- § **Broad enough to create coalitions and provide multiple paths to success**
 - § Workforce development rather than CLASS trainings
- § **Balance systems building and program investments**
 - § Some years, budget increases might not be possible, but systems improvements are
- § **Capitalize on current administration priorities and/or legislator interests**
 - § Tying family strengthening investments to the current focus on childhood trauma
 - § Reducing pressure on expensive systems

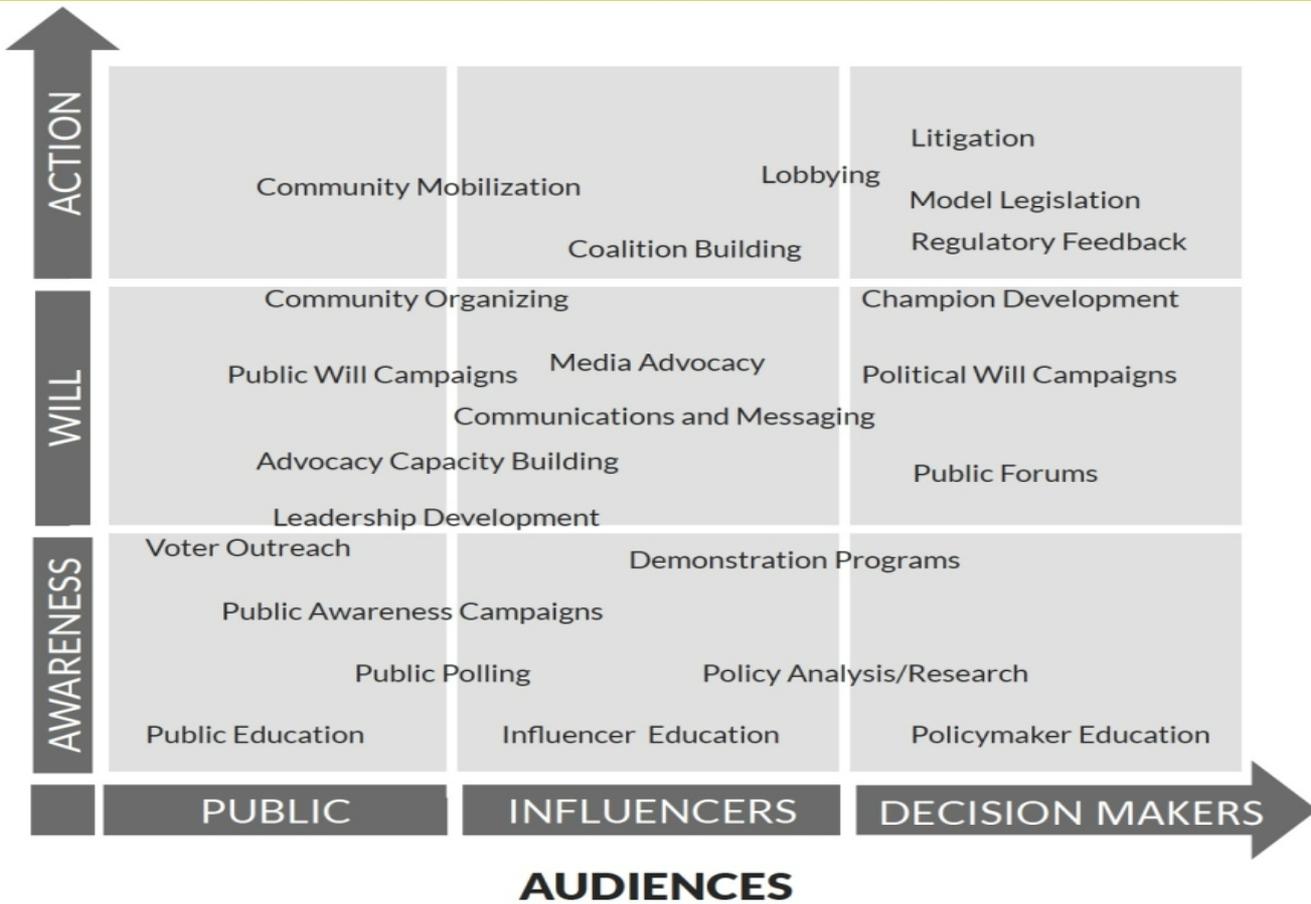
2: Learning the Rules of the Game

- § **Public agencies CAN educate law makers about what they do and what children need!**
- § **Legislator education is NOT lobbying.**
- § Examples of education strategies
 - § Talk about importance of early childhood
 - § Show the reach and impact of current investments
 - § Link early childhood to other policy agendas
 - § Document results (in interesting ways)
 - § Invite decision maker or staff to an education event or site visit
 - § Engage media (e.g. pitch story, op-ed)

CHANGES



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3: Effective Materials – Don't Obsess about Data

- § Stop worrying about good or bad data
- § Outcome data is good if you have it; but not having it shouldn't hold your advocacy efforts back
- § Use public data wherever possible to tie your efforts to broader narratives
 - § Note the indicators that cost state resources and make sure you are making a difference that matters
- § Lots of local evaluation efforts (program evaluations) don't produce usable information, including:
 - § Evaluation data about parent satisfaction
 - § Lengthy descriptions of program components
 - § Process measures

3: Effective Materials – Do Tell Great Stories

§ Be wary of the Heckman curve

§ Yes, early childhood investment is important; but because children are important, not because kids are a good investment

§ Tell the story you have

§ One compelling story of transformation is powerful; legislators never ask how many more stories you have

§ Focus on your powerful alliances

§ Utilize your most powerful spokespeople

§ Be clear about policy makers' role in the crisis

§ Don't talk about disparities as if they emerged unknowingly – choices have been made actively

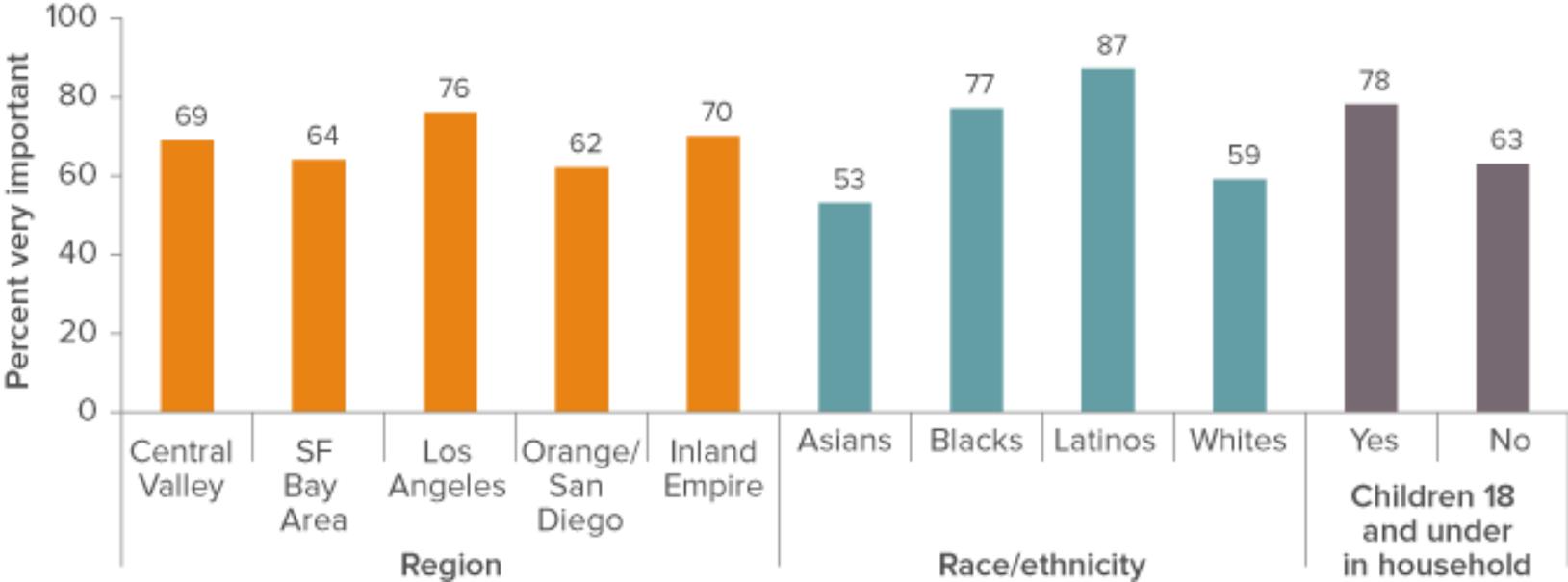
§ Connect the dots to current priorities

§ Child poverty, 3rd grade reading

Recent Policy Successes (and a Caution)

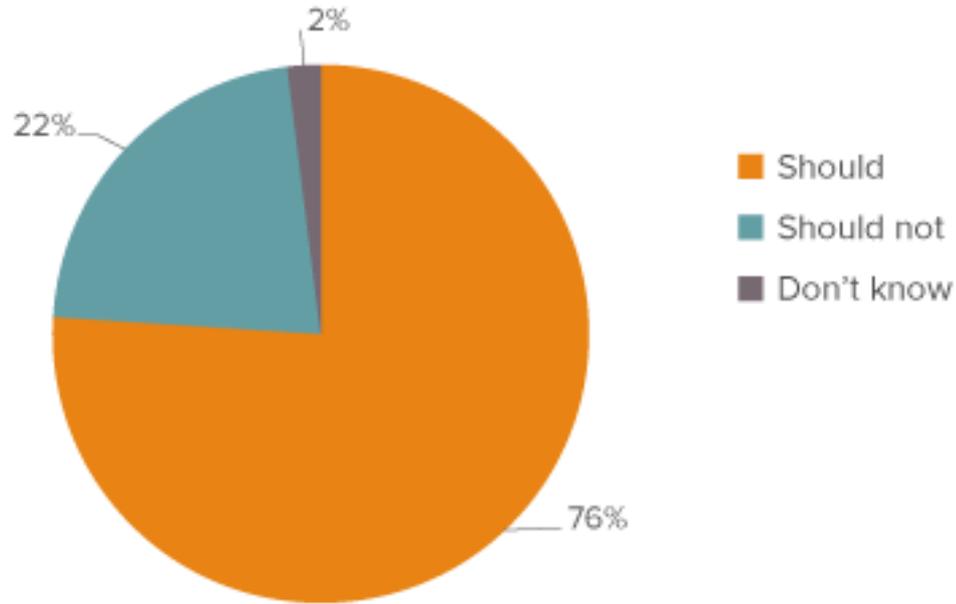
- § Common matrix across Race to the Top counties led to statewide (and state-level) adoption of QRIS approach.
- § Department of Health Care Services agreed that First 5 agencies could submit applications for funding under CA's new Medicaid 1115 Waiver.
- § Help Me Grow included in California's Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant plan.
- § But, First 5 investments are still primarily programmatic, and we need to develop clear policy asks that build on the data, outcomes, and other lessons of our 20 years of experience.

Make the Ask: Support for Early Childhood Can't Rise any Further



How important is attending preschool to a student's success in kindergarten through grade 12?

Make the Ask: Support for Early Childhood Can't Rise any Further



Do you think that the state government should or should not fund voluntary preschool programs for all four-year-olds in California?

Contact Information

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