



Changing the Landscape: Early Childhood Development Policy and Advocacy in Monterey County

First 5 Monterey County: Year 2 Policy Evaluation Report

January 2014



table of contents

Introduction	1
Policy Landscape in Monterey County	2
Awareness of Early Childhood Development	6
Advocates for Early Childhood Development	10
Update on Recommendations from Year 1 Policy Report	14
Opportunities	15
Appendix: Evaluation Design and Methods	17

Introduction

Large-scale policy change does not come easily. Often, it is the result of considerable advocacy on the part of organizations and individuals committed to a cause. In the case of improving the wellbeing of California's youngest residents, First 5 commissions throughout the state play a vital role in supporting early childhood development (ECD) services *and* advancing changes in systems, policies, and practices that enrich the development of children in their first five years of life.

First 5 Monterey County (F5MC) is a leader in Monterey County on this front. While it has been a driving force behind programs and services for more than a decade, its foray into more intentional advocacy has occurred more recently. In FY 2011-12, F5MC selected Policy and Advocacy Efforts as one of four programmatic areas to be the focus of long-term funding.¹ F5MC engages in a number of activities to achieve its goal of advancing sound, child- and family-friendly policies in the county, including participating in policy and advocacy events; sharing information to raise the awareness of ECD; coordinating efforts across sectors, and convening people and organizations to support systems change.

Since 2012, F5MC has asked its evaluation partner, Harder+Company Community Research, to explore the local policy landscape, identify opportunities to raise the prominence of ECD, and assess the impact of F5MC's efforts to promote change. This Year 2 Policy and Advocacy Evaluation Report marks an important step forward from Year 1 by including additional perspectives and analysis to inform F5MC's adaptive and emergent policy platform. Findings were collected via several methods—(1) interviews with sector leaders (from local business, the public sector, nonprofits and philanthropies, faith-based organizations, and the media), (2) a survey of community partners (nonprofits, county departments, local foundations, and advocacy groups who support children and families and who are not funded by F5MC), (3) a survey of F5MC funded partners, and (4) a formal media tracking process— and answer the following key questions:

- **How have the top policy issues in Monterey County changed over time?**
- **How aware are Monterey County community leaders of policy activities related to young children and families?**
- **What role does F5MC play in advocating for policies related to ECD?**
- **What opportunities can F5MC continue to explore to promote local policy and advocacy work in ECD?**

This report presents important findings related to those questions, including a description of opportunities moving forward. (A more detailed description of the evaluation approach and methods can be found in the Appendix.) The remainder of this report is organized into the following sections:

- ✚ **Policy Landscape in Monterey County**
- ✚ **Awareness of ECD**
- ✚ **Advocates for ECD**
- ✚ **Opportunities**

¹ First 5 Monterey County Strategic Plan for 2007-2015. http://www.first5monterey.org/uploads/Strategic_Plan_adopted_9.26.11.pdf

Policy Landscape in Monterey County

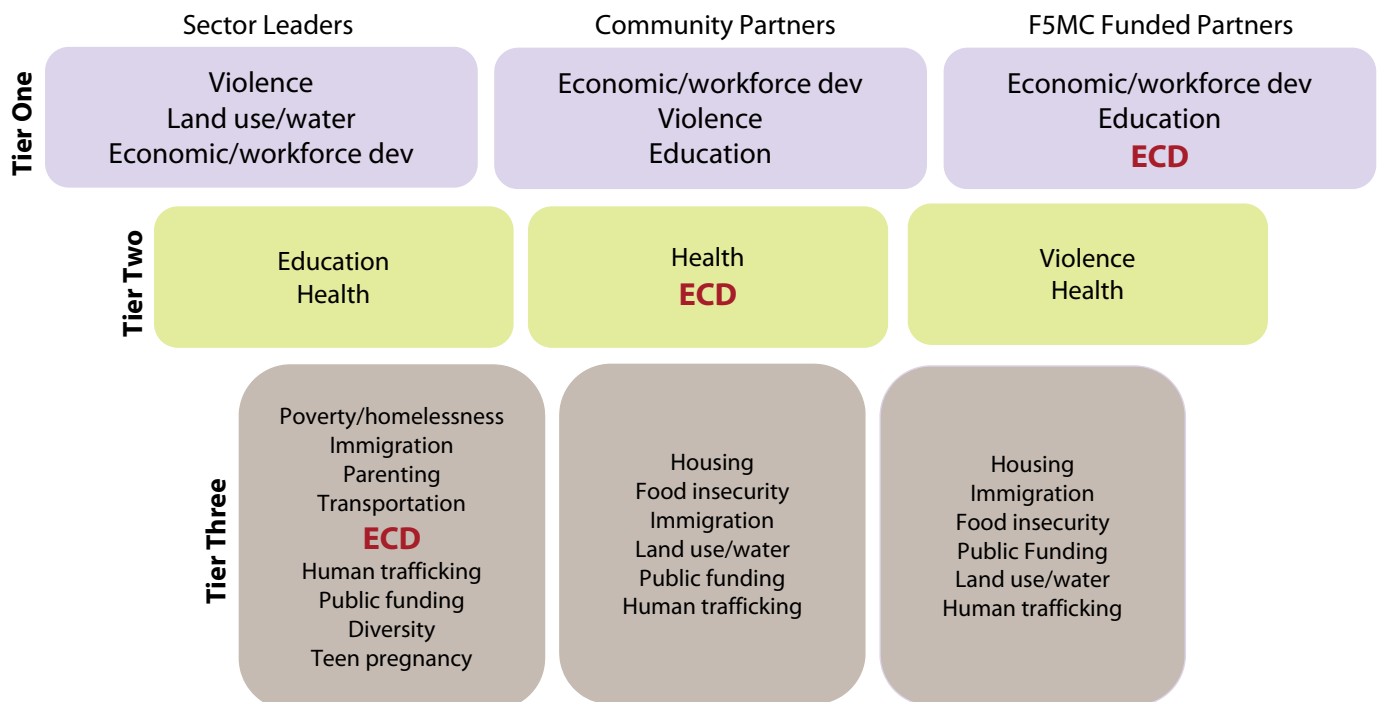
Community members agree that economic/workforce development is a top policy issue; there is less agreement about other key issues, including ECD

Identifying community members' policy priorities can provide insight into the overall landscape and network (i.e., who the key players are and where their interests lie). In addition, knowing the issues that are the focus of serious attention can help organizations think strategically about how to advance their own policy agenda.

To explore the policy landscape in Monterey County, sector leaders, community partners, and funded programs were asked to identify the highest-priority issues in Monterey County. As in Year 1, responses were organized by the number of times a particular issue was mentioned. Tier 1 captures the most frequently cited issues; Tier 2 contains issues mentioned with moderate frequency; and Tier 3 contains issues noted only rarely.

Analysis of priority policy issues across survey and interview respondents show that sector leaders, community partners, and funded partners reported similar Tier 1 and Tier 2 policy issues. Namely, economic and workforce development, education, health, and violence were identified as top policy issues in the County. While F5MC funded partners and community partners report that ECD is a Tier 1 or Tier 2 policy issue, sector leaders report it to be a third tier issue in the County.

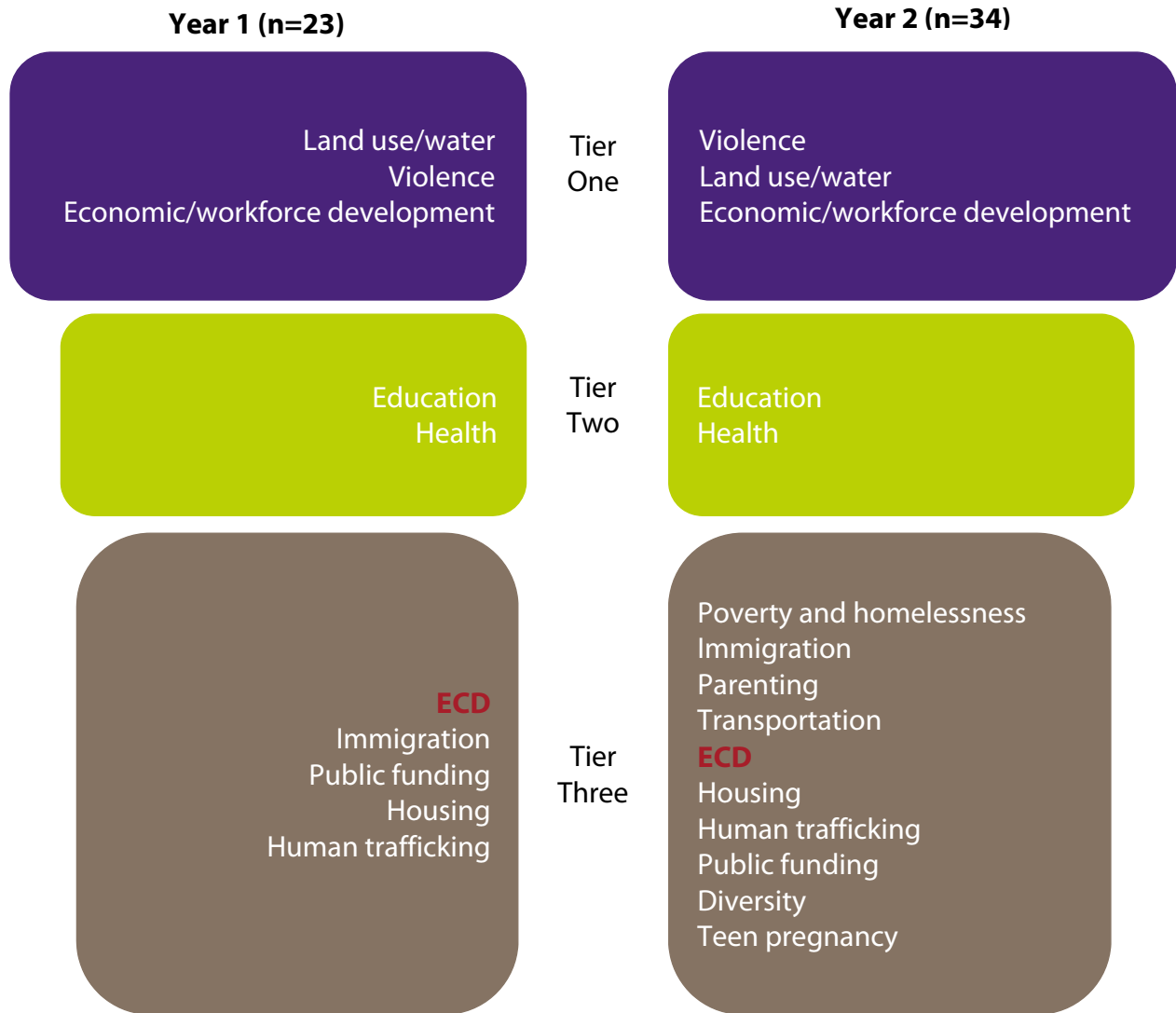
Exhibit 1. Priority issues identified by sector leaders, community partners, and funded partners



The top tier issues among sector leaders in Monterey County remained the same from Year 1 to Year 2

Exhibit 2 (below) compares sector leader responses from Year 1 to Year 2. Although the Tier 1 policy issues were the same in Years 1 and 2 (land use/water, violence, and economic and workforce development), the top priority issue *within* Tier 1 shifted from land/use water in Year 1 to violence in Year 2. Additionally, in Year 2, several policy issues were identified that were not mentioned in Year 1, including poverty, parenting, transportation, cultural diversity, and teen pregnancy. In both Year 1 and Year 2, sector leaders ranked ECD as a third tier issue.² While it may not be realistic to expect ECD to be one of the top three issues in this crowded landscape, it has held its ground as an issue worth mentioning among Monterey County’s key influencers.

Exhibit 2. Priority issues identified by sector leaders, Year 1 and Year 2



² Findings were similar when the data were analyzed from only those sector leaders who participated in both Year 1 and Year 2 interviews.

Although ECD does not rank as a Tier 1 issue, a growing portion of Monterey County leaders can articulate its connection to higher priority issues

Overall, sector leaders did not rank ECD as a top policy issue in Monterey County. However, compared to the prior year, a greater proportion of sector leaders described ECD’s significance as it relates to higher ranked issues such as public safety, economic stability, education, and health. “I am looking at the policy agenda as a pyramid, and I see ECD as the base of the pyramid,” said one respondent. Another added, “[ECD] is key to education, economic stability, access to health, and diminishing violence. There is a lot of data that shows that ECD positively impacts all outcome areas.”

Sector leaders linked ECD to a wide range of issues, examples of which are listed below.

Top Tier Policy Issue	Sector Leader Reflections
Violence	<i>“...[E]arly childhood development is fundamental to the issue of prevention and preventing youth violence.”</i>
Economic stability	<i>“...[W]e need healthy children ready for school, and in school, and to stay in school. And if we can do that, it can hopefully lead to high school graduation and to a career.”</i>
Education	<i>“In order to raise the education level of the county and to be economically competitive, you need better-educated residents and you can’t address the issue of post-secondary attainment unless you have solid development of students at the ‘lower’ level.”</i>
Health	<i>“[Early childhood development] is worthy of being a priority in Monterey County because of the impact it has on the health and wellness of our children.”</i>

Some sector leaders also explained ECD’s increased visibility in the County and how it is moving up on the policy agenda.

“[ECD] has been a little higher [on the policy agenda] because of the Early Childhood Development Initiative and the outreach efforts, like having Heckman and convening stakeholders.”

“I think that [ECD] has increased substantially in the past two years. It wasn’t even on the list before, but now it is considered.”

“I see [ECD] moving up because I see multiple things happening in the community... that are influencing how people look at early childhood.”

Spotlight:

The Lasting Impact of the James Heckman Event

While effective policy advocacy efforts rely on multiple strategies, sometimes one particular approach or event has an especially lasting impact. For F5MC, a 2012 event featuring one of the nation's top experts on the benefits of ECD had that kind of effect.

In March of 2012, F5MC and the Rotary Club of Monterey co-hosted an event at which Professor James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in economics, spoke about the impact of investing in ECD. A large cross-section of local business leaders, elected officials, public officials, and leaders of community-based organizations were in attendance. Heckman particularly addressed the need to support families with high needs with evidence-based, ECD programs. He also noted the positive and sustained return on investment when compared to other social impact strategies. More than a year later, sector leaders in Monterey County continue to reference the Heckman event and the lasting impact it has had in the County.

“The James Heckman event touched this community a lot,” said one sector leader. “We realized that we could do a lot more to improve early childhood development. It increased people’s awareness.” Another added, “Heckman was very impactful for me and for many others. There is a clear link between early childhood development, early literacy, and the ongoing health and well-being of the individual. I think the more we can focus on early childhood development, the better. [There is] not one person who attended the Heckman event that does not feel the same way I do.”

The power of the event appears to be tied to Heckman’s emphasis on demonstrating the linkage between ECD and future productivity through the use of rigorous research and analysis.

The event is one example of how public education campaigns can influence the policy landscape. “There was momentum after the Heckman event, and we leveraged that momentum to support the Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI)³ and identify early childhood development as a legislative priority,” noted a sector leader. By engaging important decision makers in its work, F5MC was able to raise awareness about ECD and begin to reframe it as an issue with greater relevance to the community at large.

“Heckman was very impactful for me and for many others. [There is] not one person who attended the Heckman event that does not feel the same way I do.”

- Sector Leader

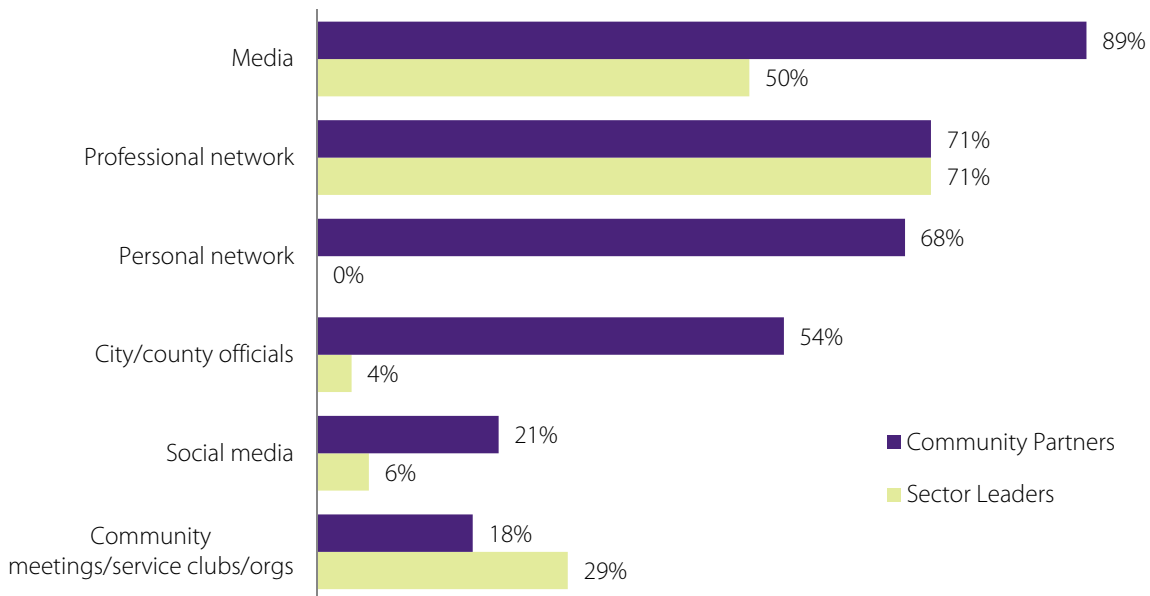
³ The ECDI was launched by the Monterey County Children’s Council, a collaborative of systems leaders in Monterey County, in September 2012 in order to encourage coordination and investment in early childhood development and assure that all young children in Monterey County have the supports they need to succeed in school and life. ECDI is collaboratively developing and implementing a county-wide vision, road map and strategic action plan for children from the prenatal period through age 5 and their families.

Awareness of Early Childhood Development

Community partners and sector leaders learn about policy issues from many sources

By understanding where stakeholders learn about policy issues in Monterey County, relevant information can be disseminated efficiently and effectively. Exhibit 4 shows that the vast majority of community partners (89 percent) learn about county-level policy issues through the media. In addition, over half of community partners learn about issues through their professional network (71 percent), personal network (68 percent), and through city/county elected officials (54 percent). Meanwhile, 71 percent of sector leaders reported learning about issues through their job and half reported learning about issues through the media. Community partners and sector leaders were also asked to indicate how often they hear about investing in ECD among their colleagues, public officials, and in the media. As shown in Exhibit 5, nearly two-thirds regularly hear about ECD from colleagues and public officials, but fewer hear about it in the media.

Exhibit 4. Where do you learn about current county-level policy issues?⁴ (n=28)*



* Respondents were able to select multiple answers; therefore, the percent column does not total 100%.

Exhibit 5. How often do you “sometimes” or “often” hear about investing in ECD from...

	Community Partners	Sector Leaders
your colleagues?	86%	82%
public officials or other influential people in your community?	65%	79%
the media?	57%	44%

⁴ Community Partner Survey was a closed-ended question; sector leader interview question was open-ended.

Spotlight:

Early Childhood Development in the Media

As indicated above, the media—broadcast, print, and online/social—remains a powerful information source for many Monterey County residents. F5MC’s community partners in particular rely on the media as a trusted provider of information about what is happening in the county, even more than they rely on public officials or their colleagues.

As an emerging method in policy evaluation, the media tracking effort enables F5MC to chronicle policy and advocacy efforts retrospectively. The assessment team used a formal media tracking process to examine the quantity and content of media coverage about early childhood issues over time. The analysis encompassed local print⁵ and broadcast⁶ news media, as well as electronic outreach and social media⁷.

Media coverage included a range of issues related to early childhood

Media stories and articles highlighting the following issues: child care, Head Start, and preschool, were most prevalent in Monterey County. Specifically, search terms that included child care (77), Head Start (57), preschool (51), early childhood (41), and *Para Los Niños*⁸ (30) yielded the highest number of stories and articles.

Exhibit 6. Top 10 Search Terms (January 1, 2011 – July 31, 2013)

Key Search Term	Print	Broadcast	Total
Child Care	37	40	77
Head Start	13	44	57
Preschool	31	20	51
Early Childhood	33	8	41
Para Los Niños	0	30	30
First Five/First 5 (not incl. F5MC)	18	9	27
First 5 Monterey	13	3	26
Literacy	18	5	23
Childcare	2	11	13
Daycare	1	11	12

In addition, a synthesis of high-level themes from these terms found commonalities and linkages among media content. Notably, issues of ECD, parenting and families, preschool, and policies related to these topics were recurring themes across all of these terms.

⁵ Sources: news media archives and LexisNexis (Monterey County Herald, Salinas Californian, MC Weekly)

⁶ Source: Universal Information Services (KION, KSBW, KSMS-TV (Univisión), KCBA-Fox, KMUV-Telemundo)

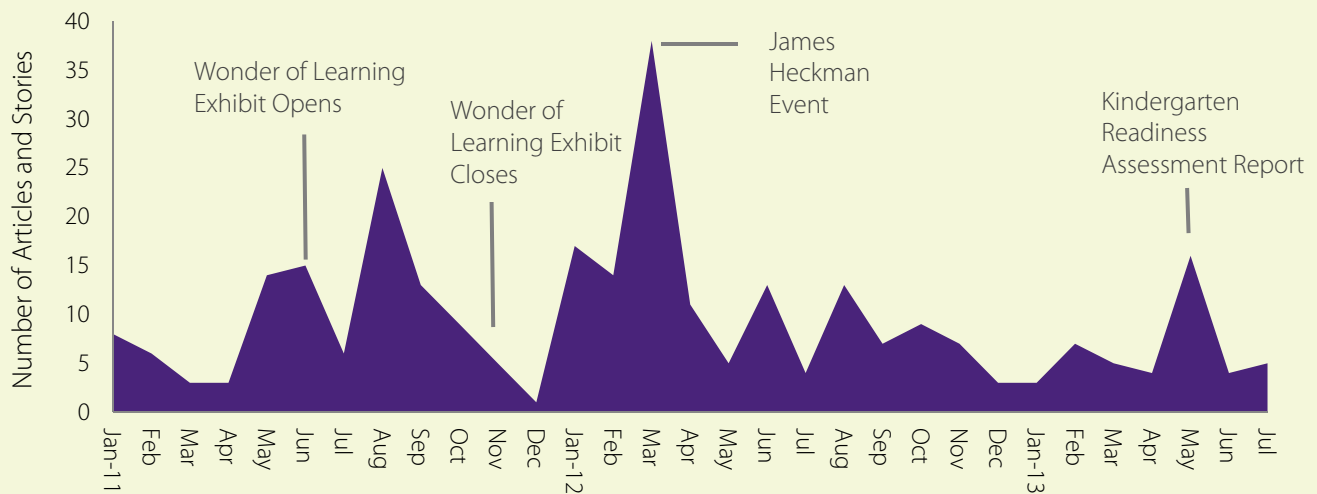
⁷ Sources: F5MC Facebook account and ConstantContact for eNewsletters

⁸ “For the Children” in English

Several F5MC events generated peaks in media coverage on the ECD issue

The 2012 community forum featuring James Heckman was an effort by F5MC to draw the attention of a cross-section of the Monterey County community to ECD. The graph below (Exhibit 7) highlights the changes in frequency of broadcast and print media coverage within a pre- and post-Heckman event timeframe (January 1, 2011 – July 31, 2013) and incorporates other key early childhood events in Monterey County, such as “The Wonder of Learning” exhibit opening at the Steinbeck Center⁹ and the release of the 2012 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment¹⁰ report.

Exhibit 7. Frequency of Coverage (January 1, 2011 to July 31, 2013)



F5MC is expanding its efforts in social media and electronic outreach

To reach a larger audience and enable efficient communications about early childhood issues, F5MC is cultivating an active social media and electronic outreach presence. F5MC’s biannual eNewsletter currently has 586 subscribers. For the six eNewsletters sent out since spring 2011, an average of 29 percent of subscribers open each newsletter, and 16 percent click on at least one link to seek additional information. These rates are slightly higher than those of comparable organizations.¹¹

F5MC began posting on its Facebook page in April 2010. F5MC’s Facebook community is overwhelmingly female (81 percent) and tends to be between 25 and 44 years old (67 percent). The table on the right shows the number of F5MC’s Facebook “Likes” compared to other First 5 agencies of similar size.

First 5 County Agency	Number of “Likes”
Fresno	926
Sonoma	504
Monterey	119
Santa Cruz	51
San Joaquin	No Facebook page available
Santa Barbara	No Facebook page available

⁹ A traveling international exhibition from Reggio Emilia hosted by F5MC and other community partners that aims to inspire parents, educators, service providers, community leaders, policy makers, business, and other advocates for children to better understand the powerful learning that occurs in early childhood.

¹⁰ A study commissioned by F5MC that provides a comprehensive picture of incoming kindergartners in the county.

¹¹ Constant Contact (the F5MC eNewsletter vendor) compiles data every year that examines over 200 million emails from Constant Contact Email Marketing customers who provided their business type. For the “government agency or services” account type, the average open rate is 24%, and the average click-through rate is 13%.

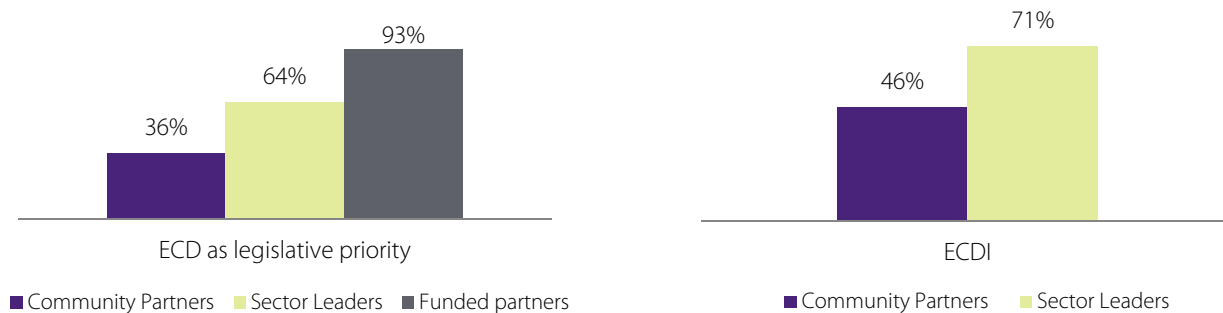
While most community leaders recognize the *general* importance of ECD in Monterey County, many are not aware of *specific* ECD-related policy activities

In addition to raising overall awareness of ECD in the county, F5MC has achieved several specific policy accomplishments. In the last year, two of the most notable milestones to which F5MC has contributed include:

- **The Monterey County Board of Supervisors proclaimed 2013 “Year of the Child” and identified ECD as a legislative priority.**
- **The Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) was launched in 2012 by the Monterey County Children’s Council to develop a countywide strategic plan for ECD.**

These public policy accomplishments have been visible to the majority of key influencers– 64 percent of sector leaders reported being aware that the Monterey County’s Board of Supervisors identified early childhood development as a legislative priority, and 71 percent reported that they were aware of the Initiative.¹² On the other hand, while almost all of the funded partners (93 percent) were aware of ECD as a legislative priority, only 36 percent of community partners were, and less than half (46 percent) of community partners were aware of the ECDI. These findings are somewhat surprising given that the community partners surveyed for this evaluation included nonprofits, county departments, local foundations, and advocacy groups who, although were not currently funded by F5MC, provide services to children, youth, and families in Monterey County.

Exhibit 3. Awareness of early childhood development policy activities in Monterey County



¹² Question about awareness of the ECDI was not asked of funded partners.

Advocates for Early Childhood Development

F5MC is becoming increasingly visible among sector leaders as a primary advocate for ECD

F5MC works to advance policies for ECD on two fronts: (1) as an advocate and public educator providing community members with timely and relevant information to support advocacy work, and (2) as a catalyst, convener, and facilitator bringing people and organizations together to support systems change.

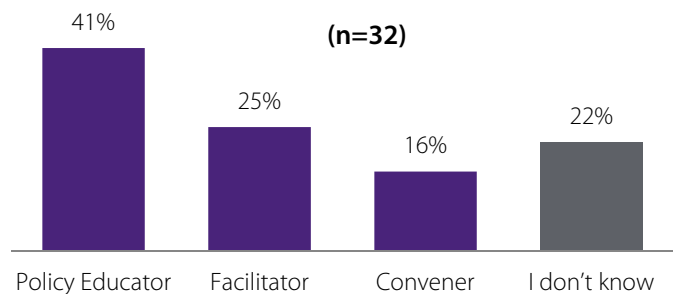
Based on sector leader and community partner responses to questions about the main advocates for ECD policies, F5MC has steadily solidified its place as one of the leading voices in the county. The number of sector leaders who recognize F5MC as a policy advocate grew from 64 percent in 2012 to 76 percent in 2013. Sector leaders described F5MC as a “very strong advocate” and “clearly the number one organization” for promoting ECD policy.

Sector Leaders who recognize F5MC as a policy advocate has grown:

64% in 2012 → 76% in 2013

When asked how F5MC has impacted policies related to ECD, 41 percent of sector leaders recognized F5MC’s efforts in policy education, 25 percent were familiar with their role in facilitating advocacy efforts, and 16 percent described F5MC’s efforts to convene stakeholders (see Exhibit 8). It is also important to note that 22 percent of sector leaders were unaware of how F5MC was involved in ECD policy work in the County. Specific comments related to the findings in Exhibit 8 are described below:

Exhibit 8. Sector Leader Awareness of F5MC's Policy Role*



* Respondents were able to list multiple answers; therefore, the percents total more than 100%.

+ Many sector leaders recognized

F5MC’s role in raising awareness of policies affecting children and families. A number of sector leaders feel that F5MC has been proactive in bringing ECD to the attention of various stakeholders. “They appear at Children’s Council, they give presentations,” said one. “Wherever they can be heard, they are making their pitch.” Another added, “They have done a good job of educating the community on the issue and continue to spread the message to arenas that haven’t realized the value of ECD.”

+ Sector leaders were also familiar with F5MC’s work as a facilitator for ECD policy change.

Several sector leaders commented that F5MC has advanced ECD as a legislative priority and leveraging funding in the county. “There is an increasing focus on policy development because of their work,”

noted one. A few respondents pointed specifically to the role of F5MC in leveraging legislative support from the Board of Supervisors.

- + **Some sector leaders knew of F5MC's role as an advocacy convener.** Some sector leaders also mentioned the importance of F5MC in convening stakeholders, a theme that came up among many when exploring the opportunities for the agency in the future. "They're making a strategic plan to help," noted one sector leader. "They're organizing around collective action to have a unified voice for what Monterey County stands for and what Monterey County wants."

Although many sector leaders identified a number of the roles that F5MC plays, opportunities exist for increasing their awareness of F5MC's role. Twenty-two percent of respondents did not know what F5MC's policy role is. "I don't know lately about what they've done and if it's making a difference," said one sector leader. Another commented, "I don't really know what they do, I just know that they play a key role."

More organizations emerged as potential partners for F5MC

In its role as catalyst and convener, F5MC has the opportunity to engage other interested parties in expanding the scope and impact of their policy efforts. In addition to F5MC, organizations that sector leaders identified as advocates for promoting policies that support early childhood development included the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE), schools/school districts, the Health Department, the Board of Supervisors, United Way, Children’s Council, and Social Services, among others (see Exhibit 9). Together, these agencies represent both current and potential partners of F5MC who can advance policies for young children and families in Monterey County.

Exhibit 9. Main Advocates for ECD Policies*

	2012 Sector Leaders (n=22)**	2013 Sector Leaders (n=34)**	Community Partners (n=28)**
First 5 Monterey County	64%	76%	46%
Health Department	14%	35%	7%
Schools/school districts	14%	26%	7%
MCOE	-	26%	4%
United Way	9%	24%	4%
Board of Supervisors	-	24%	11%
Social Services	14%	21%	-
Children’s Council	5%	21%	7%
Head Start	14%	15%	4%
Pediatricians	-	12%	-
Child Abuse Prevention Council	5%	8%	4%
Higher education	-	8%	-
Community Foundation	-	8%	-
Child Care Planning Council	5%	6%	-
Boys and Girls Club	5%	3%	7%
Parents	5%	-	7%
Local media/Success by Six	-	-	7%
Harmony at Home	9%	-	-

* Those listed were mentioned by two or more respondents.

** Respondents were able to list multiple answers; therefore, the percent column may total more than 100%.

Partners are interested in promoting ECD policies, but are limited in their capacity to do so

Involving the community in policy activities helps to raise an issue’s visibility and increases the likelihood that policies accurately reflect public concerns. Community leaders can participate in a number of activities, including planning and organizing meetings/events, contacting the media, and writing newsletters. In order to gauge the potential for advancing ECD policy by engaging community participants, both funded and community partners were surveyed on their interest and capacity for performing advocacy work.

The majority of community partners reported an interest in advocating for policies related to ECD, with 92 percent reporting that they were “somewhat” or “highly” interested in advocacy work. A large majority of community and funded partners also reported being comfortable advocating, with 81 percent of community partners and 100 percent of funded partners reporting that they were “somewhat” or “very” comfortable promoting ECD policies (see Exhibit 10.)

Exhibit 10. Interest and Comfort in Advocacy

	Community Partners (n=26-27)	Funded Partners (n=29)
Somewhat or highly interested in advocating	92%	n/a*
Somewhat or very comfortable advocating	81%**	100%

*Funded partners were not surveyed on this topic.

**19 percent reported that they were unable to advocate through their organization.

Despite high interest in and comfort levels with advocating for ECD policies, less than half of community and funded partners felt they had a strong or very strong capacity to perform a number of advocacy activities, including developing talking points, organizing constituencies, and identifying opportunities (see Exhibit 11). When funded partners were asked about the barriers to taking a more active role in policy and advocacy activities, they noted lack of time (85 percent) and lack of resources (59 percent) as the largest barriers (data not shown).

Exhibit 11. Organization’s Capacity for Advocacy

	Strong or Very Strong	
	Community Partners (n=28)	Funded Partners (n=29)
Gain visibility and credibility with key policymakers and influencers	54%	34%
Develop talking points and messages for diverse audiences	42%	24%
Organize/mobilize grassroots constituencies	36%	30%
Serve as a central voice for ECD policies and concerns at the local level	36%	28%
Identify advocacy opportunities	32%	21%
Use media to gain visibility for ECD	21%	20%

Update on Recommendations from Year 1 Policy Report

To strengthen their approach on public policy and systems change efforts, F5MC has made strides in a number of areas that were recommended in the Year 1 report. The following section summarizes the progress that has been made in each of the areas identified in the Year 1 report.

- ✓ **Focus efforts to link early childhood development to top tier policy issues in Monterey County.** Although ECD still does not rank as a top tier policy issue in Monterey County, a growing number of leaders are beginning to articulate its connection to higher priority issues. In consideration of this finding, F5MC continues to focus its policy activities and messaging on how long-term investments in ECD are related to top tier issues – especially violence and economic development.
- ✓ **Increase the reach of F5MC’s policy change efforts.** F5MC continues to partner with a range of organizations to increase the reach of their policy change efforts. For example, F5MC participates in the ECDI, along with a number of other key systems leaders, to encourage investment in ECD programs and services. Future evaluations should explore the extent to which F5MC engages with other organizations that are also considered to be advocates for ECD (see Exhibit 9), and the opportunities to expand those partnerships.
- ✓ **Become the champion for early childhood development in Monterey County.** From Year 1 to Year 2, there was an increase in the percent of key sector leaders who reported that F5MC was a main advocate for ECD (from 64 percent to 76 percent). To understand how the Commission can continue to brand itself as the champion for ECD, the Year 2 evaluation also identifies strategies to engage funded partners in policy change processes (e.g., developing talking points, educating organizations about current policy issues, identifying current efforts aimed at supporting ECD). F5MC may consider implementing these activities to raise both their own visibility and that of ECD in general.
- ✓ **Develop an advocacy workplan that includes concrete projects for key influencers and funded partners.** F5MC intends to develop a formal advocacy workplan that details tasks/events, timelines, and key action steps for themselves as well as for influencers and funded partners. While this remains an area of opportunity for F5MC, findings from the Year 2 evaluation indicate that this plan should focus on reinforcing linkages to other top policy issues, reaching out to local media, expanding awareness about F5MC and ECD among both community partners and key influencers, and building policy and advocacy capacity among funded partners as detailed below.

Opportunities

To effectively advocate for policies and programs, organizations must first establish a baseline understanding of the policy landscape in which they are working. This includes identifying competing policy issues, recognizing key players, and gauging partners' interest in and comfort with advocacy efforts. By providing this valuable information, organizations can develop and prioritize strategies to advance their policy agenda. Based upon the findings from the Year 2 report, Harder+Company offers the following opportunities for F5MC moving forward:

When advocating for early childhood development, continue to link it to other top policy issues in the county in order to increase relevance and attention.

While sector leaders continue to report that ECD is not a top tier policy issue in Monterey County, many now understand and are able to articulate how it relates to top tier policy issues. In addition, several new policy issues emerged in the Year 2 survey that add to an already crowded policy landscape – although some of those newer issues do have linkages to ECD (e.g., poverty, teen pregnancy). Because early childhood is competing with other necessary and important priorities that are often perceived as more urgent, F5MC should continue to work with sector leaders and partners to think strategically about how to raise the visibility of ECD by consistently linking it to other higher priority issues in the county.

Reach out to media outlets to raise the awareness of early childhood development investments and importance.

Given that many community partners learn about policy issues from the media, F5MC can develop an advocacy plan that includes targeted outreach activities (e.g. media outlets, including social media) to raise awareness about the importance of investing in early childhood development. This can be accomplished through the following strategies:

- Increase print and media coverage of F5MC policy priorities by targeting top news outlets to cover early childhood. As reflected in the media tracking analysis, these outlets include the *Monterey County Herald*, *Salinas Californian*, and KSBW and KION television stations, and may also include media outlets specific to south Monterey County.
- Improve social media outreach by regularly posting on F5MC's Facebook page with relevant and timely content.
- To gauge effectiveness and reach of these efforts, consider establishing metrics and benchmarks for electronic outreach and social media tools such as Facebook, Constant Contact eNewsletters, and Google Analytics for the F5MC website. This will also help define and refine F5MC's online audience in order to improve targeted marketing efforts.

Continue to expand community education about the policy priorities of F5MC.

While over three-quarters of sector leaders reported that F5MC is one of the primary supporters of policies for ECD, 22 percent of sector leaders were unaware of the specific activities F5MC engages in. With this in mind, F5MC has an opportunity to formalize and promote its policy agenda more broadly. This may include formally defining and prioritizing policy goals; identifying strategies for implementation; and promoting policy priorities through the media, funded partners, and key influencers in the County.

Reach out to and convene current and potential partners to work toward creating policy change for early childhood development.

Given the increased momentum around early childhood issues across the County and nationally, F5MC has a growing opportunity to work with other local advocates on ECD-related policy issues, including schools, government agencies, key policy makers, nonprofits, and foundations. By collaborating with other organizations that support ECD, F5MC can gain new allies, increase the visibility of ECD, and align resources.

Support organizations to engage in policy related activities.

While community and funded partners report that they are interested in promoting ECD policies, they are limited in the time and resources that are necessary to do so. Partners provided a number of opportunities for F5MC to increase organizations' capacity including:

- Assisting organizations in developing talking points to support local efforts;
- Educating organizations about current policy issues facing young children and families;
- Identifying current efforts in the County aimed at supporting ECD; and
- Fostering regional collaboration among ECD partners.

F5MC participates in a number of activities to advance sound, child- and family-friendly policies in Monterey County, including supporting families and community members in advocating for children 0-5 and educating policy makers and the general public about the importance of ECD. Continuing to engage in these strategies—and also considering the opportunities described above—can be a key factor in sustaining indicators of child well-being beyond investing in direct service programs.

Appendix: Evaluation Design and Methods

Harder+Company's approach to this evaluation drew on the foundation laid during the 2012 Year 1 Policy and Advocacy evaluation. The Year 1 Report served as a baseline for understanding the top policy issues in the County, the primary advocates for ECD, as well as opportunities and challenges facing ECD in the local policy arena. While the Year 2 evaluation continues to track this information, it also explores how ECD is related to top policy issues and assesses the visibility of ECD in Monterey County. Specifically, the Year 2 evaluation answered the following research questions:

- **How have the top policy issues in Monterey County changed over time?**
- **How aware are Monterey County community leaders about policy activities related to young children and families?**
- **What role does F5MC play in advocating for policies related to ECD?**
- **What opportunities can F5MC continue to explore to promote local policy and advocacy work in ECD?**

To address the research questions stated above, the Year 2 evaluation gathered information about ECD policy and advocacy from a number of diverse perspectives in Monterey County.¹³

Sector Leader Interviews. Thirty-four sector leaders in Monterey County were interviewed including 14 of the 17 who were interviewed in Year 1.¹⁴ Interviewees included key influencers and leaders from local business, the public sector, nonprofit/philanthropic community, faith-based organizations, and the media.

Community Partner Survey. This survey was distributed to nonprofits, county departments, local foundations, and advocacy groups who, although were not currently funded by F5MC, provide services to children, youth, and families in Monterey County. Responses from a total of 28 community partners in Monterey County are included in this report.

Funded Partner Survey. F5MC funded partners were asked about their involvement in policy and advocacy work, their comfort level engaging in policy and advocacy work, and any challenges or barriers they face in engaging in policy and advocacy work. The survey also included questions related to funded agencies' experiences and understanding of F5MC's role with policy and advocacy work (n=55). Findings from these questions are included in this report.

Media Tracking. The policy evaluation tracked quantity and nature of coverage about early childhood issues covered in print, broadcast, and electronic media using 118 key terms. This included analyzing data from print media (via LexisNexis), electronic outreach/social media, and broadcast media from January 1, 2011 to July 31, 2013.

¹³ The Community Partner Survey, Funded Partner Survey, and Media Tracking data were new sources of information that were incorporated into the Year 2 policy evaluation design.

¹⁴ The Year 2 evaluation included interviews with additional leaders in the County including those not interviewed in Year 1.

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