



First 5 Monterey County 2007-08 Early Learning Opportunities Evaluation Report

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prepared for



prepared by



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Evaluation Highlights

This section presents evaluation highlights according to the three areas of the ELO evaluation that occurred during FY 2007-08:

- a description of families and children who received services from ELO-funded partners and the kinds of services that were provided,
- the results of a Playgroup Program Implementation Case Study involving a subset of funded partners, and
- a baseline description of the extent to which funded partners are collaborating with each other and their opinions about **F5MC** activities, as part of the Systems Change Evaluation.

Client-Level Data

The table below presents a description of children, families, and providers who received services from funded partners in FY 2007-08.

Client and Service Delivery Data	
	Highlights
Service Delivery Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Of the 12,411 clients served, most were served by programs in Community Vision I¹ (50 percent) and Community Vision III² (44 percent). In FY 2007-08 Community Vision II³ was in its initial development stage and programs in this vision area did not serve a large number of clients. ■ Overall, the service types with the highest number of service units were 1) <i>in-person consultation</i> (including case management, counseling and therapy), 2) <i>home visitation</i>, 3) <i>screenings and/or assessments</i>, and 4) <i>parent education</i>.
Client-Level Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ More than 12,000 children, parents and providers received services funded by F5MC and more than 7,000 parents and children participated in F5MC-sponsored community events this fiscal year. ■ Two thirds of parents served (66 percent) reported their primary language as Spanish. The percentage of Spanish-speaking clients served by F5MC is higher than the percentage of Monterey County residents who reported Spanish as their primary language (40 percent).⁴ ■ The majority of children served reported their race/ethnicity as Latino (79 percent). The percentage of Latino and white children served by F5MC was similar to the percentage of Latino and white children in Monterey County born on Medi-Cal. Compared to FY 2006-07, F5MC-funded partners served a similar percentage of Latino children in FY 2007-08. ■ Nearly half of all children served (48 percent) were from the Salinas region. Within this region, most children lived in East Salinas. About a quarter (25 percent) of children served by F5MC were from South County, followed by Peninsula (17 percent), and North County (8 percent).

Recommendations

- + Monitor client and service delivery data on a quarterly or semi-annual basis in order to help funded partners make appropriate program adjustments.

¹ Community Vision I: Parents Feel Competent, Well-Informed and Capable of Supporting Their Child

² Community Vision III: Children are Mentally and Physically Healthy

³ Community Vision II: Families Have Quality Affordable Early Care and Education of Choice

⁴ *First 5 Monterey County 2005 Children and Families Data Profile*

- + Adjust outreach and recruitment methods to achieve target client and service objectives.
- + Create a workplan to ensure thorough and complete reporting in the Persimmony data system.

Playgroup Program Implementation Case Study

In FY 2007-08, **F5MC** funded five partner agencies – Cabrillo Family Resource Center, Castro Plaza Family Resource Center, King City Family Resource Center, Salinas Adult School, and Soledad Adult School – to implement playgroups. **F5MC** engaged the evaluation team to conduct an exploratory assessment of playgroups in order to learn more about local models of implementation, anticipated outcomes, and promising practices.

Playgroup Program Implementation	
Domain Areas	Highlights
Population Served	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Each of the sites implementing playgroups served a predominantly Latino population and served mostly female parents and caregivers. The majority of children served were between 0-3 years old.
Service Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Playgroup sites reported serving 765 children and 694 parents in FY 2007-08. ■ According to parents, the most common method of finding out about playgroups was word of mouth – learning about the program directly from someone they knew, be it a family member, friend, or professional. ■ According to program staff, family participation on any given day may be affected by weather as well as seasonal changes that affect parents’ work schedules and household responsibilities.
Logistics and Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Four of the five partner agencies conduct playgroups at school-based sites while one program operates playgroups at two different housing complexes. ■ Logistical differences across sites are driven by the need for playgroups to be responsive to parents’ schedules. Therefore, the time of day at which playgroups are held varies by site and by season in accordance with the school year or migrant work schedules. ■ At the majority of sites, playgroups are two hours in duration.
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All sites were staffed with playgroup leaders who had received some training in early childhood education; however, all of the partner agencies reported challenges associated with hiring qualified staff to lead the playgroups. ■ Playgroups were generally facilitated by a single staff person regardless of size, and interviews with line staff and observations of playgroups confirm that sites with higher participation levels would likely benefit from more staffing support.
Activities and Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Funded partners who offer playgroups generally do so because they are conducting the Parents as Teachers Program, which combines home visits with a host of parent-child activities. ■ Playgroups are designed and implemented based primarily on the Parents as Teacher program goals and the past experience of playgroup leaders who lead the playgroup sessions. There is not a formal curriculum or manual to guide the design and implementation of playgroup activities. ■ Funded partners implement common playgroup components including free play, facilitated group play, parent education and snacks for children and parents. Despite common elements, sites varied in terms of their approach to parents’ education, organization of groups by age cohorts, integration with home visits, and language.

Playgroup Program Implementation

Domain Areas	Highlights
Participant Feedback and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overall, parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the playgroups and indicated positive changes in their knowledge and behavior as a result of their participation in playgroup activities. 100 percent of parents reported that as a result of participating in playgroups, they learned different ways to respond to their child's behavior and learned more about their children's expected stages of growth.

Recommendations

- + Facilitate a discussion between **F5MC** and funded programs, as well as within funded programs, aimed at sharing information and identifying promising practices with respect to some of the findings presented in this report.
- + Explore ways to strengthen the connection between home visitation programs and playgroups.
- + Future evaluation activities might explore whether parents are seeking out playgroups to promote positive relationships with their children or whether playgroups are accessed because other parent-child activities are not available in their neighborhood or due to a lack of venues to interact with other parents.
- + Future evaluation activities might explore possible variations in parent and child outcomes based on their level participation in playgroups and other services such as home visits.

Systems-Level Findings

The Commission actively supports collaboration among funded partners and the larger system of services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families and seeks opportunities to build capacity and strengthen organizations in ways that will facilitate coordinated and accessible services. Given the centrality of this work, the ELO evaluation explored five outcome areas related to the Commission's work related to the system of services for children ages 0 to 5 (Relationships and Collaboration among Funded Partners, ELO Essential Characteristics, Program Development and Sustainability, Interactions with **F5MC** Staff and Commission, Special Needs Systems). In order to assess current levels of collaboration among funded partners as well as information about the ELO Essential Characteristics, **F5MC** engaged the evaluation team to obtain feedback from **F5MC**'s funded agencies on their systems-level activities.

Levels of Collaboration Scale

- 0. No Interaction**
- 1. Networking:** aware of organization; loosely defined roles; little communication; all decisions are made independently.
- 2. Coordination:** share information; some defined roles; frequent communication; some shared decision making.
- 3. Collaboration:** share ideas and resources; frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust; decision making is done jointly.

Systems-Level Outcome Highlights	
Outcome Areas	Highlights
Relationships and Collaboration among Funded Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Funded partners are highly connected to each other, but mainly at the level of Networking, suggesting room for change toward greater levels of interaction among funded partners in the future. Specifically, funded partners identified 53 percent of all possible interactions at the level of Networking, 18 percent at the level of Coordination and 15 percent at the level of Collaboration. ■ A core group of funded partners described as “key players” appear to be strategically placed within the network based on the number and strength of their interactions with other partner agencies. These key players are at the heart of the network, have more direct interactions with other agencies, and can possibly broker interactions between other agencies that are not directly connected to each other. ■ Funded partners serving the Salinas area appear especially well-connected with other agencies serving the same region in terms of their level of collaboration. Agencies serving Salinas tended to have more interactions at higher levels on the scale (Coordination or Collaboration) compared with other funded partner agencies serving other regions. ■ Funded partners serving children and families countywide reported many interactions with other agencies serving children and families countywide, but mostly at the Networking level.
ELO Essential Characteristics	<p>Culturally and linguistically appropriate services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most partner agencies reported offering services in Spanish (95 percent) and English (86 percent). ■ 97 percent of respondents reported that their staff reflected Latino populations served and 85 percent indicated that their staff reflected white populations served. ■ The majority of staff reported having full-time funded program staff with bilingual capacity (88 percent). ■ 25 percent of funded agencies do not provide cultural competency training activities. <p>Flexible and community-based services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Funded agencies report providing services at various locations, including the program’s facilities (83 percent) and school sites (73 percent), and offer services at different times of the week (e.g., weekday mornings (85 percent), weekday evenings (80 percent), and weekends (80 percent). ■ Findings suggest there are barriers that prevent some clients from accessing services, including lack of transportation services, clients moving due to seasonal agricultural work, and a lack of knowledge of community resources and supports. <p>Family-centered services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most funded agencies (74 percent) have services available for all members of a nuclear family with young children. ■ 25 percent of agencies reported that they did not formally involve parents in their funded program. <p>Coordinated services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 47 percent of staff do not believe that service duplication occurs frequently.

Systems-Level Outcome Highlights

Outcome Areas	Highlights
Program Development and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 76 percent of partner agencies increased capacity in the following program-level evaluation activities: developing and implementing evaluation plans; creating or identifying data collection instruments; collecting outcome data; and analyzing or reporting data. ■ 61 percent of staff reported being very satisfied while 29 percent were moderately satisfied with the efforts of F5MC to increase sustainability. ■ 77 percent of staff predicted that their agency would very likely implement part of their sustainability plan. ■ 55 percent of agencies were able to apply for other non-First 5 grant funding, while 47 percent were able to secure other funding.
Interactions with F5MC Staff and Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The vast majority of survey respondents reported that they “agree” or “strongly agree” that F5MC staff are responsive to inquiries (91 percent) and act in the best interest of young children and families (94 percent). ■ Respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with the Commission, with over 87 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that F5MC is respected, and 74 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that the Commission seeks the input of parents and caregivers when making decisions.
Special Needs Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most respondents indicated that their agency is aware of special needs programs and services (84 percent) and that they refer children to these programs (68 percent). ■ Although 19 percent of respondents said that duplication of services “sometimes” occurs for children demonstrating developmental delays or special needs, more than one-third (36 percent) reported that duplication “rarely” happens. 42 percent said they did not know whether service duplication occurs.

Recommendations

- + Convene funded partners to engage in a deliberative process aimed at identifying conditions that would support building more and stronger collaborative relationships.
- + Facilitate a dialogue between **F5MC** and funded programs designed to effectively address specific aspects of the ELO Essential Program Characteristics.
- + Enhance **F5MC Commission** interactions with funded partner agencies and the community.
- + Collaborate with programs serving children with special needs and their families to improve the special needs system.

Introduction

In 1998, Proposition 10 authorized the use of a 50-cent per pack tax on tobacco to fund early childhood development programs and services at the state and local level. In 1999 the *First 5 Monterey County (F5MC)* Commission was created to improve the lives of the County's youngest children and their families. Nearly a decade later, the Commission has served over 100,000 children, families and caregivers. In 2005, *F5MC* began the creation of a new strategic plan with an emphasis on increasing sustainable early learning opportunities (ELO) in order to better serve children ages 0 to 5 and their families. A team of diverse stakeholders worked with *F5MC* staff and consultants to design and guide a participatory strategic planning process. Over 1,000 community voices participated in identifying the three priority visions to guide the Commission's work from 2007 to 2015:

- Parents Feel Competent, Well-Informed and Capable of Supporting their Child
- Quality, Affordable Early Care and Education of Choice
- Children are Mentally and Physically Healthy

F5MC Vision:

All children reach their full potential in a family and community that values and respects childhood.

F5MC Mission:

To serve as a catalyst to create sustainable change in systems, policies and practices that enrich the development of children in their FIRST 5 years of life.

The Commission has continued to place a high value on the lessons it learns as a funder of services for young children and their families, and as a catalyst, convener and facilitator that encourages improvement in the system of services available to support the County's youngest children and families. On an annual basis, the *F5MC* Commission receives a local evaluation report to highlight the results of its activities in order to assess the past fiscal year's successes and challenges. Through evaluation, *F5MC* helps support and improve funded programs designed to improve the lives of the County's youngest children and their families.

This evaluation report presents the results under the new ELO Strategic Plan, documenting the work accomplished by *F5MC* and its funded partners from July 2007 through June 2008 (FY 2007-08). This report focuses primarily on three areas of the evaluation that occurred during this first year:

- a description of families and children who received services from ELO-funded partners and the kinds of services that were provided (Chapter 1),
- the results of a Program Implementation Case Study involving a subset of funded partners implementing playgroups to document how these programs are implemented (Chapter 2), and
- a baseline description of the extent to which funded partners are collaborating with each other and opinions of *F5MC* activities (Chapter 3), as part of the Systems Change Evaluation.

First 5 Monterey County's Evaluation Design

Evaluation, like other forms of learning, capacity building and organizational reflection, is promoted in all aspects of the Commission's work. Evaluation enables *F5MC* and its funded partners to learn what is and is not going well and why. Through evaluation, the Commission helps support the funded programs designed for children and families throughout Monterey County.

In 2007, *F5MC* contracted with Harder+Company Community Research, collaborating with Westat, to conduct a four-year evaluation of the Early Learning Opportunities Strategic Plan. The new evaluation framework is based on the ELO community visions and outcomes and incorporates input and suggestions from *F5MC* staff, the Evaluation Advisory Committee, and funded partner agencies. It employs a sequenced approach, in which earlier stages of the evaluation set the groundwork for later stages, where more rigorous evaluation activities take place.

- **Stage 1: Client-Level Data.** Development of a client-level data system to track service data for individual families, children, and providers who receive *F5MC*-funded services;
- **Stage 2: Outcome Evaluation.** Measurement of cross-cutting indicators as well as implementation and outcome data at the program level; and,
- **Stage 3: Measurement of Systems Change.** Assessment of changes in the system of services for children and families in Monterey County among funded partners as well as other community agencies.

Stage 1: Client-Level Data. In the first stage, *F5MC* contracted with an information technology contractor (Persimmony) to support the development of a client-level data system that tracks service data for individual families, children, and providers who receive *F5MC*-funded services. The ability to store client-level data on client characteristics, services received, and referrals is critical for determining unduplicated service counts required for state-level reporting and forms the foundation for subsequent stages of the evaluation framework.

Stage 2: Outcome Evaluation. The second stage of the evaluation focused on the measurement of cross-cutting indicators and outcome data at the program level. Program-level data collected by the evaluation team and by funded partners in their tri-annual report was documented in the form of a case study. The case study identified how a subset of funded partners (i.e., those implementing play groups) carried out their programs by exploring the following domains: (1) population served; (2) service demand; (3) logistics and settings; (4) staffing; (5) activities and approach, including best practices; (6) evaluation; and (7) participant feedback. This data contributes to a greater understanding of how these funded partners have implemented their programs and also provides recommendations for program improvement. Additionally, Stage 2 involves the measurement of cross-cutting outcomes – that is, it will assess a common set of outcome indicators across all funded partners that provide direct services to children and families. Starting in fall 2008, the evaluation team will conduct interviews with parents who participated in at least one of the funded partner programs, to assess changes over time in the cross-cutting outcomes. Results from the parent interview will be the centerpiece of the fiscal year 2008-09 *F5MC* Evaluation Report.

Stage 3: Measurement of Systems Change. The third and final stage of the evaluation measures changes in the system of services for children and families in Monterey County. In order to assess these system-level changes, the evaluation team administered surveys with staff from funded partners as well as community

agencies that interact with *F5MC*-funded partners. These surveys identify the nature of current and ongoing linkages between agencies (*F5MC* and non-*F5MC*) in Monterey County and opinions about *F5MC* activities. The survey will be carried out longitudinally to assess change in these linkages and relationships.

Chapter 1: Client-Level Data

Part 1: Service Delivery Data

This section presents an overview of the services that were provided by *F5MC*-funded partners in FY 2007-08. During FY 2007-08, there were 24 funded programs serving over 12,000 children, parents, and providers. Services offered by funded partners included case management, parent education, home visits, playgroups, counseling, screening and assessment, and support services for providers.

Evaluation Question:

- What services are being offered by ELO-funded partners?

As part of its ELO strategic planning process, *F5MC* defined three broad community visions with corresponding strategies (outlined below). The first vision entails parenting skills and education; the second entails access to early care and education for all families; and the third vision area entails children's physical and mental health.

Community Visions for ELO-Funded Partners

I. Parents feel competent, well-informed and capable of supporting their child

- Parents use child development information in parenting practice
- Literate parents
- Comprehensive information and referral to community resources
- Family participation in local decision-making about child related issues

II. Families have quality, affordable early care and education of choice

- Higher education and ongoing professional development for childcare providers
- Sufficient centers and childcare spaces in a variety of affordable settings
- Equal access to childcare regardless of income or legal status

III. Children are mentally and physically healthy

- Mentally healthy and stable families
- Parents use nutrition and health information in parenting practice
- Childcare providers are capable and competent in supporting children with special needs

Exhibit 1 displays the funded programs corresponding to each of the three community visions. Fifteen of the 24 funded programs most closely fall in the first vision area; three programs most closely fall in the second vision area; and the third vision area contains seven programs. Programs in the first vision area provide services including case management; home visitation; playgroups; general parenting education; community resources and referrals; counseling; and family literacy programs. Programs in the second vision area provide early child care and education services, and support early educators in maximizing the development of children ages 0 to 5. Programs in the third vision area offer services including health screenings and health insurance enrollment; home visitation; in-person consultation; oral health services; screening services and programs for children with special needs; and provider training and support.

Exhibit 1: Community Visions and Corresponding Funded Programs

Community Visions	2007-08 Funded Programs
I. Parents Feel Competent, Well-Informed and Capable of Supporting Their Child	Alisal Community Family Resource Center; Cabrillo Family Resource Center; Castro Plaza Family Resource Center; Centro Binacional; Interactive Parenting Media-Nuestros Niños and Childhood Matters; Community Foundation of Monterey County- Literacy Fund; Dads in Action; King City Family Resource Center; Pajaro Valley Unified School District--Healthy Start Children's Resource Center; Radio Bilingüe; Salinas Adult School; Salinas Public Library; Soledad Adult School; United Way 2-1-1 Monterey County
II. Families Have Quality, Affordable Early Care and Education of Choice	CARES (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards) Program; Alegria Child Development Center; Community Foundation Neighborhood Grants
III. Children are Mentally and Physically Healthy	Avance – Special Needs Project; Community Foundation of Monterey County-Nutrition Education; Community Oral Health Services; Door to Hope - MCSTART; Easter Seals Central California; Monterey County – Behavioral Health; Monterey County Probation Department – Child Advocate Program

It is important to note that client demographics and service delivery data were not available for the following programs: Community Foundation of Monterey County – Literacy Fund; Community Foundation of Monterey County – Nutrition Education; and United Way 2-1-1 Monterey County. In addition, service delivery data were not available for Alegria Child Development Center.

Exhibit 2 portrays the number of children, parents and providers served in each vision area. Of the 12,411 clients served, most were served by programs in Community Vision I (50 percent) and Community Vision III (45 percent).⁵

Exhibit 2: Number of Clients Served by Community Vision

Community Visions	Children	Parents	Providers	Total Served
I. Parents Feel Competent, Well-Informed and Capable of Supporting Their Child	3,090	2,964	163	6,217
II. Families Have Quality, Affordable Early Care and Education of Choice	34	40	628	702
III. Children are Mentally and Physically Healthy	2,330	2,428	734	5,492
Total Receiving Services	5,454	5,432	1,525	12,411

⁵ As noted by *F5MC* staff, in FY 2007-08 Community Vision II was in its initial development stage and programs in this vision area did not serve a large number of clients.

Exhibit 3 presents the number of units of service provided by funded programs according to service type and community vision area. In total, over 15,000 units of service were provided by funded programs in FY 2007-08. Overall, the service types with the highest number of service units were 1) *in-person consultation* (including case management, counseling and therapy), 2) *home visitation*, 3) *screenings and/or assessments* (including oral health screening and assessment for special needs), and 4) *parent education*.

Funded programs under Community Vision III provided the highest number of service units, followed by programs under Community Vision I. In the first vision area, the most commonly provided services were home visitation and parent education services. In the second vision area, all services provided fell under the provider capacity building and support category. In the third vision area, in-person consultation, home visitation, and screening and assessment were the most commonly provided services.⁶

Exhibit 3: Number of Service Units by Community Vision

Service Type	Number of Service Units			Total
	Community Vision I: Parenting	Community Vision II: Quality Childcare*	Community Vision III: Mental and Physical Health	
In-person consultation sessions	0	0	3,611	3,611
Home visits	1,155	0	1,726	2,881
Screenings and/or assessments	0	0	2,469	2,469
Respite Child Care Sessions	1,338	0	0	1,338
Parent education workshops/sessions	1,109	0	103	1,212
Health visits	0	0	1,150	1,150
Resource/referral and application assistance sessions	742	0	0	742
Case management sessions	402	0	158	560
Health insurance application assistance sessions	524	0	0	524
Provider capacity building and support workshops/sessions	238	56	145	439
Radio shows	130	0	0	130
Other	43	0	0	43
Total	5,681	56	9,362	15,099

*As noted by *F5MC* staff, in FY 2007-08 Community Vision II was in its initial development stage and programs in this vision area did not serve a large number of clients.

⁶ While the data presented in this section is as accurate as possible, it is important to take note of potential inconsistencies in the reporting of service counts. For example, in some cases programs may have reported number of *participants* in a given service instead of the number of *sessions held*. This relates particularly to the reporting of service counts for playgroups. It appears that some programs reported the number of playgroup sessions, while others reported the number of attendees. Because of this inconsistency, playgroup service units are not included here.

Part 2: Client Demographics

This section presents a description of children, families, and providers who received services from *F5MC*-funded partners in FY 2007-08. Where appropriate, comparison data from FY 2005-06 and FY 2006-07 are provided.

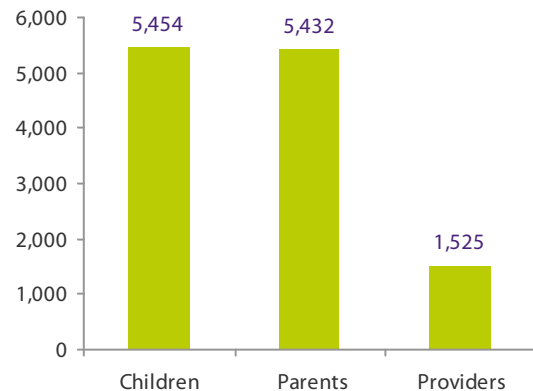
Evaluation Questions:

- Who and how many people are being served?
- Are funded partners reaching the appropriate target populations?

F5MC-funded partners served more than 12,000 children, parents and providers this fiscal year. As seen in Exhibit 4, children and parents made up the bulk of those served, with more than 5,000 children and 5,000 parents receiving services. Approximately 1,500 providers received services, and more than 7,000 parents and children participated in *F5MC*-sponsored community events.

Exhibit 4: Total Served 2007-08

	Children	Parents	Providers	Total	Community Events Participants
Number Served	5,454	5,432	1,525	12,411	7,248



Exhibits 5 and 6 show the number of parents, children, and providers served in FY 2007-08 with comparison data for FY 2005-06 and FY 2006-07. Program data show that in FY 2007-08, funded partners served more clients than in FY 2005-06 but fewer than in FY 2006-07. When comparing across the three years, funded partners served the highest number of clients in FY 2006-07.

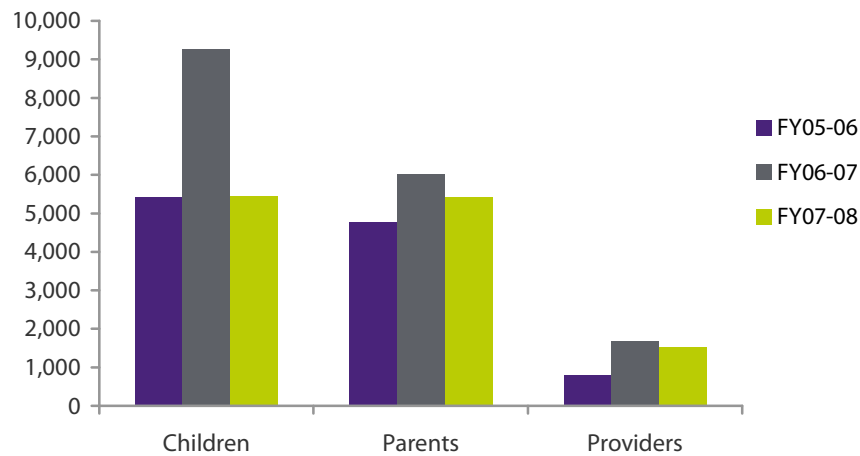
It was noted by *F5MC* staff that because FY 2007-08 was the start of a new funding cycle under a new strategic plan, it was expected that funded programs would serve fewer clients compared to FY 2006-07. Staff explained that this year, a number of ELO-funded partners were preparing for implementation and/or just beginning to serve clients. In addition, staff explained there was a shift in the strategic focus from funding programs implementing one time activities and health services to funding programs that promote ongoing relationship

building between children and their families. This strategic focus in funding programs that provide more intensive services suggests that fewer families were served, but served at greater intensity.

Exhibit 5: Numbers Served by Year and Client Type

	Children			Parents			Providers			Total		
	FY 05-06	FY 06-07	FY 07-08	FY 05-06	FY 06-07	FY 07-08	FY 05-06	FY 06-07	FY 07-08	FY 05-06	FY 06-07	FY 07-08
Total Served	5,410	9,256	5,454	4,773	6,028	5,432	784	1,681	1,525	10,967	16,965	12,411

Exhibit 6: Numbers Served by Year and Client Type



Overall, the total number of clients served in FY 2007-08 increased 13 percent from FY 2005-06 and decreased 27 percent from FY 2006-07. Compared to FY 2006-07, program data indicate that 41 percent fewer children were served this year. The number of parents and providers served this year also decreased 10 percent and 9 percent, respectively (see Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7: Change in Numbers Served by Client Type

	FY 07-08	(n) Chg FY 06-07	% Chg FY 06-07	% Chg FY 05-06
Children	5,454	-3,802	-41%	+0.8%
Parents	5,432	-596	-10%	+14%
Providers	1,525	-156	-9%	+95%
Total	12,411	-4,554	-27%	+13%

Exhibit 8 shows the gender of children, parents and providers served in FY 2007-08. The data show that the reported gender of children served was evenly split between male and female. In contrast, over three quarters of parents were female, as were nearly 90 percent of providers.

Exhibit 8: Gender of Participants FY 2007-08

	Children		Parents		Providers	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Female	2,448	45	4,214	78	1,347	88
Male	2,458	45	1,218	22	178	12
Unknown	548	10	0	0	0	0
Total	5,454	100	5,432	100	1,525	100

Exhibit 9 illustrates the primary language of parents and providers served. The majority of parents served (66 percent) reported their primary language as Spanish, while 43 percent of providers indicated that their primary language was Spanish. In both cases, the percentage of Spanish-speaking clients served by **F5MC** is higher than the percentage of Monterey County residents who reported Spanish as their primary language (40 percent).⁷

Exhibit 9: Primary Language of Parent and Provider Participants FY 2007-08

	Parent Participants		Provider Participants	
	n	%	N	%
Spanish	3,583	66	655	43
English	1,136	21	831	55
Other	208	4	7	0
Unknown	505	9	33	2
Total	5,432	100	1,525	100

As shown in Exhibit 10, nearly 80 percent of children served by **F5MC** in FY 2007-08 were Latino. Nine percent of children served by **F5MC** were of indigenous or Native American descent, followed by five percent who were white. No other race/ethnicity comprised more than one percent of children served.

⁷ First 5 Monterey County 2005 Children and Families Data Profile

Exhibit 10: Ethnicity of Children Served by F5MC FY 2007-08

Children Served by F5MC		
Ethnicity	n	%
Hispanic/Latino	4,293	79
Indigenous/Native American	488	9
Caucasian/White	259	5
Multiracial	80	1
Asian & Pacific Islander	72	1
Black/African American	66	1
Other	19	0
Unknown	177	3
Total	5,454	99*

**Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding*

Exhibit 11 compares the percentage of Latino and white children served by **F5MC** with the percentage of Latino and white children ages 0-5 in Monterey County and the percentage of Latino and white children born on Medi-Cal. Latino populations made up approximately 80 percent of children served by F5MC in FY 2007-08, compared with 70 percent of children 0-5 in Monterey County in 2003 and 90 percent of Medi-Cal funded births in 2006.^{8,9} A higher percentage of children 0-5 in Monterey County were white (21 percent) compared to white children served by F5MC and white children born on Medi-Cal (both 5 percent). It is important to note that the Indigenous ethnicity is not tracked by Medi-Cal births. Indigenous children account for 9 percent of children served by **F5MC**.

⁸ *First 5 Monterey County 2005 Children and Families Data Profile*

⁹ *Monterey County Health Department, Community Assessment and Data Analysis Unit, 2007*

Exhibit 11: Percent of Latino and White Children Served by F5MC Compared to Medi-Cal Births and Monterey County Children 0-5

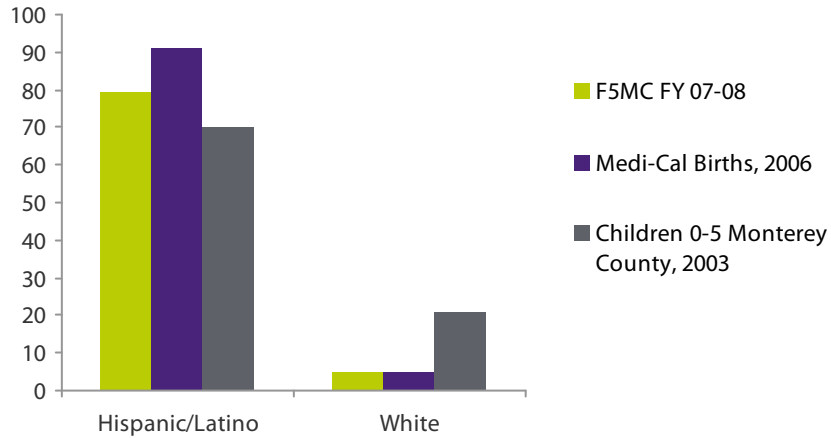


Exhibit 12 shows the age breakdown of children served by *F5MC* in FY 2007-08. Among children whose age was reported, a greater number were between 0 and 3 years of age compared to those who were between 3 and 5 years of age.¹⁰

Exhibit 12: Age of Children Served by F5MC FY 2007-08

	n	%
0 to 3 yrs (up to 36 months)	2,341	43
3 to 5 yrs	1,431	26
Unknown	1,682	31
Total	5,454	100

Exhibit 13 presents the number of children served by *F5MC* by zip code and corresponding city and region of Monterey County. When looking at the breakdown of children by region, the data show that nearly half of all children served (48 percent) were from the Salinas region. Within this region, most children lived in East Salinas. About a quarter (25 percent) of children served by *F5MC* were from South County, with the highest numbers from Greenfield, King City and Soledad. Seventeen percent of children lived in the Peninsula region, with highest numbers from Seaside and Marina. Eight percent of children served were from North County, with the highest numbers in Pajaro and Castroville.

¹⁰ Because of the high percentage of children of unknown age reported this year, it is not possible to provide an accurate comparison to the age of children served in FY 2006-07.

Exhibit 13: Children Served by Zip Code

Region	City	Zip Code	Number	Percent
Salinas			2,603	48
	East Salinas	93905	1,919	
	North Salinas	93906	336	
	South Salinas	93901	165	
	North of Salinas	93907	70	
	River Rd.	93908	15	
	Unknown	Unknown	98	
Peninsula			931	17
	Seaside	93955	546	
	Marina	93933	208	
	Monterey	93940	33	
	Pacific Grove	93950	11	
	Carmel Valley	93923	3	
	Carmel Valley	93924	2	
	Pebble Beach	93953	1	
	Unknown	Unknown	127	
South County			1,385	25
	Greenfield	93927	722	
	King City	93930	273	
	Soledad	93960	234	
	Gonzales	93926	53	
	Chualar	93925	49	
	San Lucas	93954	37	
	San Ardo	93450	6	
	Jolon	93928	5	
	Lockwood	93932	2	
	Spreckels	93962	2	
	Unknown	Unknown	2	
North County			421	8
	Pajaro	95076	239	
	Castroville	95012	127	
	Aromas	95004	12	
	Moss Landing	95039	6	
	Unknown	Unknown	37	
Unknown			114	2
Total			5,454	100

Discussion and Recommendations

It is worthy to note that most client-level data reported in FY 2007-08 was not collected by funded partners using a common data system. Instead, funded partners stored their data on spreadsheets which were submitted to **F5MC** and the evaluation team, and was then combined with data from all other funded partner agencies. However, starting in June 2008 funded partners began to enter client and service delivery data into a common data system (i.e., Persimmony) which will enable both **F5MC** and its funded partners starting, in fiscal year 2008-08, to store more precise data on client characteristics, services received and referrals made. Awareness of these characteristics is critical for determining unduplicated services counts.

During FY 2007-08 **F5MC** funded partners served more than 12,000 children, parents and providers and more than 7,000 parents and children participated in **F5MC**-sponsored community events. Overall, analysis of the client-level data reveals that **F5MC** funded partners continued to serve a similar percentage of Latino children ages 0-5 in FY 2006-07 and FY 2007-08 and served a similar percentage of Latino and white children in Monterey County born on Medi-Cal. In addition, half of all clients served were in Community Vision I (Parents Feel Competent, Well-Informed and Capable of Supporting Their Child) and nearly half were served by Community Visions III (Children are Mentally and Physically Healthy). As noted by **F5MC** staff, in FY 2007-08 Community Vision II was in its initial development stage and programs in this vision area did not serve a large number of clients. In an effort to 1) ensure that funded programs are meeting their client and service targets, and 2) ensure the systematic collection of client and service delivery data, **F5MC** and its funded partners may wish to consider the following recommendations.

Recommendations for **F5MC**

- + **Monitor client and service delivery data on a quarterly or semi-annual basis in order to help funded partners make appropriate program adjustments.**

Recommendations for Funded Partners

- + **Adjust outreach and recruitment methods to achieve target client and service objectives.**
- + **Create a workplan to ensure thorough and complete reporting in the Persimmony data system.**

Chapter 2: Playgroup Program Implementation Case Study

This chapter presents the results from an exploratory multi-case study that highlights program implementation and program-level outcome data from funded partners implementing playgroups.

Evaluation Question:

- Have individual programs improved the lives of children and families?
- How do impacts vary across programs? What factors account for variation?

Summary of Program Implementation Case Study

- + Funded providers who offer playgroups generally do so because they are conducting the Parents as Teachers Program, which combines home visits with a host of parent-child activities.
- + Playgroups are designed and implemented based primarily on Parents as Teachers program goals and the past experience of playgroup leaders who lead the playgroups. There is not a formal curriculum or manual to guide the design and implementation of playgroup activities.
- + Funded partners implement common playgroup components including free play, facilitated group play, parent education and snacks for children and parents. Despite common elements, sites varied in terms of their approach to parents' education, organization of groups by age cohorts, integration with home visits, and language.
- + Each of the sites implementing playgroups served a predominantly Latino population and reported serving a majority of 0-3 year olds.
- + Playgroup sites reported serving 765 children and 694 parents in fiscal year 2007-08. Overall, sites reported a high demand for playgroups among community members.
- + Generally, playgroups span two hours and are conducted at school sites.
- + Most sites adopt a trial and error approach in order to identify which time slots maximize participation.
- + All sites are staffed by playgroup leaders who have received early childhood education training. All of the funded partners reported challenges associated with hiring qualified staff to lead playgroups, and all line staff expressed a desire for more staffing of playgroups.
- + Most sites focus on parent-oriented rather than child-oriented goals.
- + Overall, parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the playgroups and indicated positive changes in their knowledge and behavior as a result of their participation in playgroup activities.

Part1: Introduction

Playgroups are a promising strategy for encouraging and promoting family involvement in children’s early learning. The Administration for Children and Families defines a playgroup as “a small gathering of parents and their children ages 0 to 5, who get together on a regular basis for play and interaction.”¹¹ In contrast with home visits, playgroups provide an opportunity for parents of young children to meet and share information with one other and learn more about their children by observing the ways in which they interact with other children and adults. Playgroup leaders are present to share parenting and child development information, model strategies for supporting child development and interactions, identify families who may be in need of services and make appropriate referrals. While infant and toddler playgroups are generally designed to support childhood development by strengthening parent and child relationships, groups for preschoolers may emphasize socialization aspects of child development.

In FY 2007-08 **F5MC** funded five partner agencies – Cabrillo Family Resource Center, Castro Plaza Family Resource Center, King City Family Resource Center, Salinas Adult School, and Soledad Adult School – to

implement playgroups. **F5MC**-funded providers who offer playgroups as part of their ELO activities generally do so because they are conducting the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program. The PAT model and curriculum is designed to benefit children and families by focusing primarily on improving parenting and parent-child interactions. This model typically combines home visits with a variety of parent-child activities such as book reading and playgroups. These activities are designed to foster positive parenting practices, improving parent-child relationships and thereby enhancing child development.

Overall, much remains to be learned with regard to the effects of playgroup participation on families as well as what constitutes a best practice in this field. In recognition of this context, **F5MC** engaged the evaluation team to conduct an exploratory assessment of playgroups in order to learn more about local models of implementation, anticipated outcomes, and promising practices. The evaluation team employed a multi-case study approach that integrated a variety of research methods (see shaded box) in order to build

understanding of how playgroups were implemented by each funded partner. A brief review of the literature and results from the case studies are presented below.

Case Study Methods

- **Staff interviews.** Interviews were conducted with program coordinators and line staff in order to gather information about playgroup design, achievement of key milestones, barriers to implementation, evaluation capacity, and participant recruitment and satisfaction.
- **Parent focus group and survey.** A total of 51 parents participated in focus groups that gathered qualitative information about playgroup satisfaction and effects of participation. Parents also completed a brief survey in order to gather quantitative information regarding their experiences.
- **Playgroup observation.** The evaluation team conducted observations of playgroups implemented by funded partners and completed an assessment form that addressed logistics and setting, staffing, playgroup activities, and child/parent participation.
- **Scopes of work and triannual reports.** The evaluation team reviewed scopes of work and triannual reports submitted by funded partners to calculate total numbers served, target quantities and client demographics.

¹¹ *The Home Visitor’s Handbook for the Head Start Home-Based Option.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Part 2: Summary of the Literature

There is relatively little literature on playgroups as distinct from other components of family support and education programs. Research in the United States generally examines playgroups within the context of home visitation, where home visits are conceptualized as the central service strategy. A review of the literature on home visiting programs found that high quality home visiting programs can play a part in helping prepare children for school and for life but that the overall effects are relatively modest, and produce the strongest effects when paired with other services such as center-based early childhood education, joint parent-child activities, and parent groups.¹²

One of the more important evaluations of family support and education programs used quantitative meta-analytic methods to examine a diverse set of family support and education programs, varying in types of services offered and the methods of delivering these services.¹³ Almost half of the studied programs (49%) used home visits as the primary mode of service delivery, and another 12 percent used home visits to deliver some services. More than half (59%) brought parents together in groups or for more formal classes at the program or another location and more than a quarter (28%) provided joint activities for parents and children in a group setting – these would involve what we know as “playgroups.” The results found small but statistically significant average effects in all nine of the specified outcome domains including children’s cognitive and social development, parenting attitudes and knowledge, parenting behavior, family functioning, children’s physical health and development, children’s safety, parent’s mental health or risk behaviors, and family self-sufficiency. However, the researchers concluded that it is difficult to identify specific program components that account for the significant average effects they found.¹⁴ This means that it is difficult to identify the contribution of playgroups in the larger program model.

Although there is very little literature specifically looking at the playgroup component of parent support and education programs,¹⁵ some of the most important research regarding implementation and outcomes that involve a playgroup component has occurred in the study of the Early Head Start program. Early Head Start is a federally-funded community-based program for low-income pregnant women and families with toddlers up to age 3. It incorporates center-based, home-based or combination program options. The home-based program option can be useful for rural communities where families otherwise would not receive services due to distance barriers as well as for families “whose life circumstances might prevent them from being able to participate in more structured settings, including situations involving maternal depression, substance abuse, or other severe stressors.”¹⁶ The home-based model offers home visits supplemented by bi-weekly socialization groups.¹⁷ Interestingly, the results of a national evaluation of Early Head Start found that different program

¹² Gomby, D., (2003). Building School Readiness Through Home Visitation. Prepared for the First 5 California Children and Families Commission.

¹³ ** (Administration on Children Youth and Families, 2001)

¹⁴ Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. (1991). Comprehensive child development program: A national family support demonstration. First annual report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

¹⁵ European, Australian and New Zealand researchers have conducted some work aimed at identifying variations in playgroup models. These variations include institutional context (parent-organized vs. organizationally-supported), setting (school vs. home), target family population (low-income, special needs, ethnic-focused, etc.), and facilitation (trained staff vs. parent-run).

¹⁶ *Program Administrator’s Checklist for the Head Start Home-Based Program Option*. Administration for Children, Youth and Families. Accessed at <http://www.headstartinfo.org/pdf/EHS-Home-AdminChk.pdf>.

¹⁷ Administration for Children and Families (2002b). Making a difference in the lives of infants and toddlers and their families: The impacts of Early Head Start. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Accessed August, 2008 from: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs_resrch/reports/impacts_vol1/impacts_vol1_title.html

approaches in implementing Early Head Start used different theories of change. Directors from home-based programs envisioned change taking place by influencing parents and parenting through regular home visits and parent-child group socializations. They believed improved parenting and family support led to positive child development. On the other hand, directors from center-based programs placed more emphasis on child outcomes. They believed children would benefit most from direct, high-quality center program experiences. Directors from mixed-approach programs emphasized child and parent outcomes equally.

The national evaluation of Early Head Start found that by the time children were 36 months old, home-based Early Head Start had had positive impacts on parent-child relationships.¹⁸ These children were better able to engage their parents in play and parents were more supportive during semi-structured play sessions. These parents reported less parenting stress and were more likely to be in school or training than their control group parents. However, the evaluation also found that adherence to the Head Start Program Performance Standards was crucial. When home-based programs fully implemented the Program Performance Standards, there was a broader pattern of positive impacts related to children's cognitive and language development. Early Head Start parents in these sites spanked less, reported less parenting stress, and were more likely to have attended high school than control group parents. The revised Head Start Program Performance Standards require programs to offer at least two group socialization activities per month to families who receive home-based child development services. Programs with a home-based option were rated as fully implemented if they offered these group socialization activities and most families attended them regularly. Parents in less implemented home-based sites (typically sites that failed to implement child development aspects of the program) had positive impacts on social-emotional development (engagement and attention) and parent education, but not cognitive or language development. In summary, these results strongly support the importance of studying implementation of home visiting and its related components, such as playgroups. In addition, a review of the literature also suggests that well implemented parent support and education programs that involve a playgroup component can have positive impacts on parent-child relationships and child development.

Part 3: Case Study Findings

The multi-case study approach revealed a number of interesting commonalities and differences across programs with regard to both the level and nature of implementation. Findings are organized according to the following domains explored throughout the data collection process: (1) population served, (2) service demand, (3) logistics and setting, (4) staffing, (5) activities and approach, (6) evaluation, and (7) participant feedback.

Population Served

Each of the sites implementing playgroups served a predominantly Latino population. The proportion of Latino families ranged from a high of 100 percent at Salinas Adult School to a low of 73 percent at Cabrillo Family Resource Center. Castro Plaza Family Resource Center served the largest Caucasian population (21 percent), while Soledad Adult School served the largest Asian population (12 percent). Sites with complete data on the age of children participating in playgroups reported serving a majority of 0-3 year olds, with actual proportions ranging from 67 to 83 percent. According to contract monitoring data submitted to **F5MC**, King City Family Resource Center served the largest proportion of 3-5 year olds at 33 percent. Sites predominantly

¹⁸ U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Policy, Research and Evaluation. (2006). Program Models in Early Head Start: Research to Practice Brief Accessed August, 2008 from: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs_resrch/reports/program_models/prog_mod_rsrch.html

served female parents and caregivers. However, male caregivers comprised 11 percent each of the Salinas and Soledad Adult School sites.

Service Demand

Sites reported serving a total of 765 children and 694 parents during the 2007-08 contract period. Sites employ a variety of strategies to recruit families for participation in playgroups. These include flyers, outreach by home visitors, advertising in newspapers, and networking with school staff, pediatricians and the Women, Infants and Children program to obtain referrals. According to parent focus group participants, the most common method of finding out about playgroups is word of mouth, or learning about the program directly from someone they knew, be it a family member, friend, or professional. An average of 12.6 children and 10.6 parents participated in playgroup sessions observed by the evaluation team. However, the actual number of participants observed varied from a low of 5 children and 3 parents to a high of 22 children and 18 parents.¹⁹

Overall, three sites reported a high demand for playgroups among community members. One organization with multiple playgroup sites reported variation in service demand by site. According to interviews with staff of this organization, this was partly a function of the fact that the playgroups were new and still being established within the community. However, staff theorized that location factors were also playing a role. A staff member explained, “[One site] is uphill and... that is a problem. A lot of parents that attend have babies in strollers so pushing the stroller up that hill is hard.” At another site a staff member commented that the playgroup, which operates out of an elementary school, is unable to effectively outreach to parents of young children because the school does not allow parents to walk their children into the school and into the classroom. This may prevent parents from becoming aware of school-based services, including *F5MC*-funded playgroups. She went on to say, “There is not enough parking for the parents to park and walk their children in, so the principal stands out front and parents drive up, drop their kids off, the principal greets them, and the children go on in to the school. You don’t get that parent on campus kind of thing... [where] they come down and look at the program.” Finally, there was one site that reported struggling with a drop-in demand due to the seasonal migrant work schedule.

According to interviews with staff across all five sites, participation on any given day may be affected by weather as well as seasonal changes that affect parents’ work schedules and household responsibilities. Other factors that serve as actual or perceived barriers to participation reported by staff include belief that there is a fee associated with participation, concern about not understanding English, safety issues associated with walking to the site, worries about undocumented immigration status, and parents’ lack of time for participating in activities given their work, household and child rearing responsibilities.

Logistics and Setting

Playgroups at the majority of sites span two hours, though there is one site with a scheduled duration of 1.5 hours. Sites varied substantially in terms of the frequency with which they implement playgroups, from once per month, to 2 times per week, to as many as 5 times per week. The time of day in which playgroups are held also varies by site with starting times as diverse as 8:30am, 10am, 1pm, 4:30pm and 6pm. Schedules also vary by season in accordance with the school year or migrant work schedules. Logistical differences across sites are driven by the need for playgroups to be responsive to parents’ schedules. Nearly all of the staff members who were interviewed discussed monitoring attendance carefully and making modifications to playgroup schedules in the case of decreases in participation. Three of five sites sought parent preferences in this regard either

¹⁹ Playgroups at Castro Plaza Family Resource Center were not observed because of low attendance due to seasonal agricultural work schedules.

formally through surveys or informally through conversations. However, four of five sites seem to adopt a trial and error approach in order to identify which time slots maximize participation. Overall, this speaks to the high degree of flexibility funded organizations must have in order to meet the needs of parents.

Four of the funded partner organizations conduct playgroups at school-based sites, including elementary as well as high schools. One program operates playgroups at two different housing complexes. Some of the school-based playgroups are housed within portable classrooms while others occur in regular classrooms. Organizations generally have developmentally appropriate spaces that are welcome and inviting for families. However, two organizations indicated a desire to have additional outdoor play areas. There was also one organization that conducted playgroups in a multi-purpose setting that expressed a preference for having a dedicated playgroup space.

Staffing

All sites were staffed with playgroup leaders who had received training in early childhood education. Interestingly, all of the funded partners reported challenges associated with hiring qualified staff to lead playgroups. Inability to recruit staff in a timely manner resulted in program start-up delays for many of the sites. To avoid such a delay, one program reported hiring staff prior to knowing the outcome of their grant application to *F5MC*. Even after staff members were hired, program implementation was further delayed for some sites due to the limited availability of Parents as Teachers trainings.

Playgroups were generally facilitated by a single staff person regardless of size. However, at least one site has a volunteer assistant to help during sessions. Another playgroup leader relies on her two sons to help her set up the room each session and then clean things up once it is over. Many of the line staff members who were interviewed expressed a desire for more staffing of playgroups. Observations of playgroups confirm that sites with higher participation levels would likely benefit from more staffing support.

Activities and Approach

F5MC-funded partners implement common playgroup components including free play (both indoors and outdoors is available), facilitated group play components (e.g., singing songs or reading books during circle time), brief parent education, and providing snacks to children and their parents. Playgroups observed by the evaluation team varied in terms of the order of these components. They also incorporated a diverse array of play activities for parents and their children including hula hoops, basketball, making play dough, riding bicycles, blowing bubbles, reading, drawing, painting, using scissors, using puppets, water play, dolls and puzzles. Activities are often set up at various stations and are designed so that parent involvement is necessary to support the child. One program staff member observed, “We talk about the importance of letting the child choose, letting them lead in the play and how the mom is really there as a consultant, a person to let them know, ‘Oh, you’re playing with the red blocks’ and taking advantage of the time to have fun with them and to provide guidance in terms of socialization with other kids.” In addition, playgroup leaders provide participating families with referrals to community resources. Playgroups are generally organized as “drop-in” events though there are some eligibility and capacity restrictions associated with certain sites.

Playgroups are designed and implemented based primarily on Parents as Teachers program goals and the past experience of playgroup leaders. Program staff at each of the funded partner sites also report that they visited or observed other playgroups such as that offered by Salinas Adult School in order to obtain ideas and design their own playgroup approach. There is not a formal curriculum or manual to guide the design and implementation of playgroup activities. One site, however, did report borrowing from “A Place of Our Own”

television program in addition to Parents as Teachers. Several of those interviewed expressed a desire to have more guidance with regard to playgroup implementation.

Despite their common elements, sites varied in terms of their approach to parent education, organization of the groups by age cohorts, integration with home visitation, and language.

- **Parent education.** Some sites appear to have a more structured approach to the parent education component of playgroups. For example, home visitors at one organization meet and review findings from the Life Skills Progression instrument used during home visits in order to identify themes for discussion during playgroups. Another site, which conducts playgroups 4-5 times per week, meets once each quarter to develop a theme for each week that includes distribution of related materials as well as community guest speakers. Other sites identify a theme each week based on issues identified by parents or issues that arise within the playgroup setting or the community. Examples of educational themes explored by sites include health, safety, nutrition, money management, immigration, lead tests, and discipline. All sites incorporate modeling of effective parenting practices as an educational strategy in addition to a more formal discussion of specific themes.
- **Organization of groups by age cohort.** Two of the funded partner sites discussed organizing playgroups by child age (i.e., 0-2 and 3-5). This approach seems to make it easier for playgroup leaders to design age-appropriate activities and to educate parents on topics that are relevant to specific age cohorts. However, one site abandoned this approach after finding that it did not work well for parents with more than one child. The other site maintained the approach of having certain groups geared to certain age cohorts, while also making sure that there are developmentally-appropriate activities for integrating other ages. In addition, at least one group organizes playgroups that are geared specifically to teen parents. Program staff at this site noted that the playgroups for teen parents have more of a “support group” orientation relative to groups for older parents.
- **Integration with home visitation.** Funded partners were asked to describe how playgroups integrate with home visitation services provided by their organization. While nearly all sites reported overlap among families participating in home visitation and families participating in playgroups, the nature of the interface varied by program. One site strongly encouraged mothers receiving home visits to attend playgroup sessions. However, other programs did not seem to emphasize the connection between these two services. For example, one site said that parents receiving home visitation “sometimes” attend playgroups but did not appear to have an explicit strategy in this regard. Another program reported using playgroups to recruit families for participation in home visits and vice versa. This is an interesting finding in light of the federal emphasis on group socializations for Early Head Start discussed earlier as well as the finding that home visits produce the strongest effects when integrated with other programs and services.
- **Language.** Given that Latino families comprise the majority of participants across all sites, it is not surprising to learn that Spanish is the primary language spoken by a majority of parents and caregivers participating in playgroups. It is interesting to note that funded partners vary in their approaches to linguistic responsiveness. One site conducts all of their groups in Spanish. Another one offers separate groups in English and Spanish. Two organizations conduct groups primarily in Spanish but integrate English-language songs and stories, as well as translation for non-Spanish-speaking participants. Finally, there is one site that reported holding groups primarily in English with the explicit goal of building English-language skills among Spanish-speaking families.

When asked to describe their approach to cultural responsiveness, most sites felt that they were very responsive to the Latino community. However, one site reported that they would like to include more African-American parents in playgroups and another site discussed conducting additional outreach to Oaxacans. In addition, individual line staff discussed challenges associated with integrating the small number of families from non-Latino backgrounds including Punjabi, Yemeni and Japanese.

Evaluation

Because the majority of sites who offer playgroups do so because they are conducting the PAT program, the evaluation developed by the sites focuses primarily on affecting parent-oriented goals, and secondarily on child developmental milestones. Specific goals identified in funded partner scopes of work and through staff interviews include increasing parent confidence, reducing isolation among parents, increasing parental knowledge of child development, and improving the quality of interactions between parents and their children. One site also sought to increase the use of English among participating families. All of the sites have an evaluation plan in place. Many report that they plan to use instruments from the Parents as Teachers curriculum, primarily using a retrospective approach. One site appeared to have a particularly strong evaluation infrastructure in place, having received funding in the past from the Packard Foundation to participate in a longitudinal outcome study related to their home visitation services. Several of the programs described obtaining qualitative feedback from parents about program quality either through informal conversations or through formal participation in advisory groups.

At the time staff interviews were conducted, two sites expressed the opinion that it was too early to implement evaluation activities due to the brevity of the time period in which playgroup implementation time occurred. In fact, several programs considered their first-year to be a “start-up” year and commented that they would like more time for planning as part of their funding arrangement with *F5MC*. When asked to describe any barriers they faced with regard to evaluation, participants described having too much paperwork associated with reporting requirements (n=3), a lack of time due to a focus on getting sites up and running (n=1), concerns about the social desirability bias of participant feedback (n=1), and concerns about retention (n=1).

Participant Feedback

Overall, parents participating in focus groups conducted by the evaluation team reported high levels of satisfaction with the playgroups. They also indicated positive changes in their knowledge and behavior as a result of their participation in playgroup activities. More detailed findings are presented below. While the overall findings are promising, it is important to remember certain limitations associated with this data. First, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of playgroups on parents from the effects of other services received by *F5MC*-funded partners such as home visits. Second, the findings noted here are self-reported by parents and may be reflective of social desirability bias, whereby participants are more likely to report what they think others would like to hear than their true opinions and perspectives. Despite these limitations, the evaluation team believes these findings are useful for understanding parent perspectives on playgroups.

Highlights from the Focus Group Participant Survey

Parents improved the quality of their interaction with their children

- **69 percent** of parents (n=33) reported **reading** more often to their children
- **72 percent** of parents (n=42) reported **singing songs** with their children more frequently
- **78 percent** of parents (n=41) reported **trying new and different games** with their child more frequently

Parents increased their parenting skills

- **100 percent** of parents (n=51) reported learning different ways to **respond to their child's behavior** as a result of participating in playgroups
- **100 percent** of parents (n=51) reported learning more about their children's **expected stages of growth**

A majority of parents who participated in focus groups reported that the playgroups **improved the quality of interaction they had with their children**. Findings from the Focus Group Participant Survey indicated that 69 percent of parents (n=33) reported reading more often to their children, 72 percent of parents (n=42) reported singing songs more frequently, and 78 percent of parents (n=41) reported trying new and different games with their child more frequently. One parent who participated in the focus groups observed,

“At home, it’s so easy for you to say, ‘Okay, just go play over there,’ or ‘Let me go clean or do something else,’ and just not give them the full attention you’re supposed to. This helps me look at her, interact with her, and learn about her.”

Several parents talked about how parenting-related stress at times discouraged them from playing and interacting with their children. One mother commented, “With my daughter, I used to get

anxious even to feed her because I would prefer to do chores than to give her attention.” Another agreed, and explained the impact that participation in playgroups had on her. She stated, “If you share time with your children, it’s difficult because he is crying again, or he wants something. Instead, here they teach you to take advantage of the time [together], to learn what they are doing is new, and to acknowledge everything they do and celebrate it together.”

Many parents also reported **increased parenting skills**, including strategies for discipline. Findings from the Focus Group Participant Survey indicated that 100 percent of parents reported learning more about children’s expected stages of growth, and 100 percent of parents (n=51) reported learning different ways to respond to their child’s behavior. One parent who participated in the focus group simply commented, “It taught me how to talk to them. Now they listen and before they didn’t.” Another observed, “I know more what to do when they are acting up or want something. I have three kids, and the three of them will want something, and I learned that I should take it away and focus their attention on something else, whether it be singing or reading them a book.”

Some parents who participated in the focus groups reported **improvements in their stress levels and mental health** as a result of participating in play groups. One individual commented, “I felt depressed and took many medications. Ever since I started here, I have felt better and don’t have any headaches.” Another expressed a similar sentiment, and commented, “I had depression and migraines because I had nowhere to go and nowhere to distract myself. I started coming to this program and I even forgot about my headaches.” One parent described how important the support she got from the playgroup leader was after her baby was born early. She expressed, “The teacher has helped me a lot because I had depression because my baby was born premature and it was a very difficult experience for me. She helped me with the depression and has been a magnificent teacher.” Finally, there was one parent who reported that participating in the playgroup eased some of the

anxiety she felt regarding her child. She commented, “Sometimes you don’t know what is normal and what’s not because it’s your first child. Everything scares you. What you learn here is that not every child is the same. They are all different.”

Parents also described how the playgroups **increased their knowledge of community resources**, including dental care, domestic abuse, ESL classes, and low-cost preschool programs. One commented, “I learned where to find help and more support. They give you flyers on where to find services.” One parent even reported relying on the playgroup leader leading her group for support with completing program applications. She explained, “If I don’t know how to fill out a paper, I can come to the teacher and she helps me.”

Playgroups are a **source of social support** for many parents. One parent commented, “We trust each other to support each other when one of us needs something.” Another agreed, adding that, “You can relate with other parents here.” As part of this social support network, parents reported learning from each other in addition to the playgroup leader leading the playgroup. Many found it helpful to talk with other parents and learn about strategies that worked for them with respect to specific challenges they faced with their own children.

The majority of parents believe that **playgroups are good for the children**. Parents reported better behavior, increased socialization, improved language skills, and readiness for school. Representative comments include:

- *My daughter was really shy and now she’s not. Before I couldn’t get her to be away from me, and now I let her [explore in the playgroup] and it surprised me that she started playing.*
- *They’re more intelligent and ready for school routines than other kids.*
- *They’re smarter after coming to this class.*
- *I like it because they learn a routine at an early age and that makes them smarter.*
- *She didn’t share her toys before, but she has now learned to share.*
- *My daughter is older and didn’t talk. She started talking at three years old when I brought her here to school.*

When asked for suggestions about how playgroups could be improved, parents requested longer hours, more frequent sessions, increased staffing, and more funding for materials and supplies. Several parents noted a lack of activities for families with young children in their area and expressed appreciation for the playgroups.

Discussion and Recommendations

Overall, findings from the multi-case study implementation analysis reveal that playgroups supported by **F5MC** share some common components but also differ from each other in various ways. Despite these variations, parents at four of the sites that participated in the evaluation all expressed high levels of satisfaction with their playgroup experiences and believe they are having a positive impact on their parenting practices and on their children. **F5MC** may wish to consider the following program implementation and evaluation level recommendations pertinent to playgroups.

Program Implementation Recommendations

- ✦ **Facilitate a discussion between F5MC and funded programs, as well as within funded programs, aimed at sharing information and identifying promising practices with respect to some of the findings presented in this report.** Program coordinators and line staff may benefit from coming together to discuss how programs approach the following issues:

- Staffing issues, including recruiting qualified staff versed in child development and parent-child interactions, ensuring new and existing staff receive timely training opportunities, ensuring appropriate staffing levels needed to accommodate higher participation levels in the playgroups.
 - Providing quality early learning environments, including incorporating quality and age-appropriate playgroup settings and accommodating mixed ages.
 - Increasing parent participation, including obtaining parent input to identify hours and days that maximize parent participation, and supporting involvement of fathers and grandparents.
 - Culturally and linguistically appropriate services, including addressing parents' level of education and language, and developing integration strategies for families from non-dominant cultures.
 - Ongoing access to experts who can provide onsite guidance and technical assistance with regard to playgroup implementation.
- + **Explore ways to strengthen the connection between home visitation programs and playgroups.** A review of the literature on home visitation indicates that program effects are strongest when integrated with other service components. *F5MC* and funded partners may want to consider ways to increase playgroup participation of families receiving home visits.

Evaluation-Level Recommendations

- + **Future evaluation activities might explore why parents choose to participate in playgroups with their children, including whether playgroups are filling service gaps and/or to promote positive parent-child interactions.** Findings from this exploratory assessment suggest that playgroups may be addressing gaps associated with temporary closure of early education programs due to seasonal schedules or the permanent closure of a local preschool. It would also be useful to understand why families choose to participate in playgroups.
- + **Future evaluation activities might explore the level of family participation in playgroups and other services such as home visits, to the extent feasible.** It would be useful to 1) examine the characteristics of families receiving different types of interventions in order to understand potential differences in who is being served, and 2) study whether differences in implementation within and among programs influence parents' level of satisfaction and parent and child outcomes.

Chapter 3: Systems-Level Findings

F5MC is committed to working with its funded partners to enhance the effectiveness of service systems that promote early childhood development and to build sustainable programs. The Commission actively supports collaboration among funded partners and the larger system of services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. It also seeks opportunities to build capacity and strengthen organization in ways that will facilitate coordinated and accessible services. Given the centrality of this work, the evaluation explored a number of areas related to the Commission’s systems work, identified in the text box below.

Evaluation Questions

- What is the nature of relationships between funded partners and to what extent are these agencies collaborating with each other?
- Are funded partners implementing the essential program characteristics defined by the community in the ELO Strategic Planning Process?
- Are programs improving their capacity to serve young children and families, including their organizational capacity for sustainability?
- What are the perceptions of funded partner agencies in working with *F5MC* staff and the Commission?
- What is the nature of funded partners’ capacity to coordinate services for children with special needs?

Part 1: Evaluation Approach

Techniques

The 2008 Funded Partner Survey was designed to obtain feedback from *F5MC*’s funded agencies on their systems-level activities. In an effort to hear a variety of perspectives from the funded partners, the survey was sent to staff holding a range of positions at 21 agencies, as shown in the text box. Multiple analysis techniques were utilized to comprehensively examine the survey data, including social network analysis, frequencies, and composite scores. Qualitative data from open-ended survey responses were analyzed using content analysis, a technique whereby common themes are identified and described.

Who Completed the 2008 Funded Partner Survey?

- **21 agencies** (100% of 21 contacted)
- **39 respondents** (95% of 41 contacted)
 - 6 executive directors
 - 17 program coordinators
 - 16 line staff

More details on the survey respondents can be found in the Databook.

Systems Level Outcome Areas

This chapter is organized according to the five systems level outcome areas, as follows:

- Relationship and collaboration among funded partners
- Early Learning Opportunities (ELO) Essential Characteristics

- Program development and sustainability
- Interactions with *F5MC*
- Special needs systems

Key findings are described below. For further details, please see the 2008 Funded Partner Survey Databook.

Part 2: Relationships and Collaboration among Funded Partners

First 5 Monterey County is committed to playing a core role in the community as a catalyst, convener and facilitator. In this role, the Commission encourages systems change by supporting innovative thinking, promising practices and policy development by bringing people and organizations together. Although this role expands beyond that of its funded partners, *F5MC* actively works to facilitate increased coordination and collaboration among organizations directly funded by the Commission for the purpose of strengthening the system of services for Monterey County’s youngest children and their families.

Summary of Network Analysis Findings

- + The funded partners are highly connected to each other, but mainly at the level of **Networking** suggesting room for change towards greater levels of interaction among funded partners in the future.
- + A core group of funded partners described as “key players” appear to be strategically placed within the network based on the number and strength of their interactions with other agencies. These key players are at the heart of the network because they have more direct interactions with many other agencies. This places them in an advantageous position by enabling them to potentially broker interactions between other agencies who are not directly connected to each other.
- + As we move from the *Networking* to *Coordination* and finally to the highest level, *Collaboration*, we see fewer interactions between agencies. At the *Collaboration* level, the network of agencies resembles a “star pattern” in which a few funded partners at the center of the network have the most collaborative interactions.
- + Funded partners serving Salinas appear especially well-connected with other agencies serving the same region in terms of their level of collaboration. Agencies serving Salinas tended to have more interactions at higher levels on the scale (**Coordination** or **Collaboration**) compared with other funded partner agencies serving other regions.
- + Funded partners serving children and families countywide report many interactions with other agencies serving children and families countywide, but not many interactions at the higher two levels of the Collaboration Scale.

To examine interactions and collaboration among funded partners, Funded Partner Survey participants were asked to identify the nature of their agency's relationship with all other funded agencies, based on the Levels of Collaboration Scale.²⁰ This scale identifies four levels of collaboration, which are (from lowest to highest): *No Interaction* (0), *Networking* (1), *Coordination* (2), or *Collaboration* (3). The text box contains further detail on the characteristics of each level. Higher levels of collaboration correspond to a greater sharing of information and resources as well as mutual decision-making.

Data from the survey was then analyzed using social networking mapping to examine the network of interactions among 21 funded partners. Every partner was rated by every other partner using the Levels of Collaboration Scale, and the scores were then mapped using statistical analysis. This method is derived from social network analyses and visually shows the types of interactions of all agencies in the network.

This section summarizes the findings from the social network analysis and presents the nature of existing interactions between *F5MC*-funded partners during the first year of ELO. In particular, this section will:

- Describe the network of relationships that exists among funded partners
- Identify characteristics of partners that are more central in the network;
- Describe the levels of interaction along the Collaboration Scale (*Networking*, *Coordination*, *Collaboration*); and
- Describe regional differences in the levels of interaction between agency partners.

While this section of the report describes the current system of relationships among funded partners, future reports will depict trends in collaboration and coordination over time. To preserve confidentiality, the 21 funded partner agencies are not identified on the maps that follow.

Finding Meaning in Mapping

Because social networking analysis is new to many in the social services sector, this section presents some basic information about how to interpret the maps presented in this report. Three key map features to consider are interaction, density and closeness, as described below.

Interaction. Each point on the map represents an agency. The lines between points represent a relationship among agencies. Specifically, when one agency reports any type of interaction with another agency (i.e., stages 1 through 3 on the Levels of Collaboration Scale), a line between the two agencies is drawn, with an arrow showing the direction of the rating (i.e., from the agency making the rating with the arrow pointing to the

Levels of Collaboration Scale

0. **No Interaction**
1. **Networking:** aware of organization; loosely defined roles; little communication; all decisions are made independently.
2. **Coordination:** share information; some defined roles; frequent communication; some shared decision making.
3. **Collaboration:** share ideas and resources; frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust; decision making is done jointly.

²⁰The Levels of Collaboration Scale was developed by Frey BB, Lohmeier JH, Lee SW, Tollefson N, and Johanning ML. (2004). Measuring change in collaboration among school safety partners. Retrieved August 12, 2008 from http://web.ku.edu/~spear/Documents/Measuring_Change_in_Collaboration_Among_School_Safety_Partners.pdf.

other agency). This line is referred to as an **interaction**. When both agencies make the same rating for their interactions, the line will have bi-directional arrows, indicating that both agencies have given the same scale rating.

Density. When looking at a social network in its entirety, an important quality is the degree to which members are connected to each other. This quality, termed **density**, is defined as the proportion of the number of reported interactions to the total number of possible interactions connecting participants in a network. The total number of possible interactions in the Funded Partner Survey is 420.²¹ Based on survey responses, there were a total of 358 interactions with Collaboration Scale scores of 1 or higher. That means that 85 percent of the funded partners identified interactions with other funded partners at the **Networking, Coordination or Collaboration** level. These percentages suggest that most funded partners had at least some interaction with most other funded partners, and that the network as a whole is very “dense”, with many connections among the funded partners. These figures establish the baseline level of interaction in terms of network density. When the survey is conducted again next year the degree to which the density of the network has changed over time can be determined.

How Connected Are Funded Partners To Each Other?

- + **85 percent** of funded partners identified interactions with other funded partners at least on a **Networking** level
- + Funded partners identified **53 percent** of all possible ties at the level of **Networking**
- + Funded partners identified **18 percent** of all possible ties at the level of **Coordination**
- + Funded partners identified **15 percent** of all possible ties at the level of **Collaboration**

Closeness. Another key measure in network analysis is closeness, or the degree to which an individual organization is next to other individuals in a network. This is assessed by illustrating the number of direct connections an individual organization has with all other network members. Those agencies who are closest to each other are strategically placed in the network and have many direct connections with other network members.

When viewing the maps, it is important to consider that many factors may contribute to the number and intensity of interactions any of these agencies have. For example, the longer an agency has been in existence, the more time it has had to establish connections with other providers in the county. In addition, some programs may be more inherently reliant on partnerships with other agencies. For example, agencies that have similar clientele may be more likely to develop partnerships in order to reduce duplication of services to their clients. At the other end of the spectrum, an agency may not be well-connected because it does not provide direct services to families and children.

Top four reasons why funded agencies have...			
MORE contact with each other (% of respondents, n=32)		LESS contact with each other (% of respondents, n=33)	
Pre-existing relationship	(47%)	No complementary program objectives	(36%)
Complementary program objectives	(47%)	No pre-existing relationship	(27%)
Same population served	(41%)	Geographic distance	(21%)
Resource sharing, e.g., space or language capacity	(28%)	Limited staff capacity	(21%)

²¹ The total number of possible interactions is calculated as $k*(k-1)$ where k is the total number of funded partners.

While these differences are important to keep in mind, it is also worth identifying factors that may facilitate or impede interaction among funded partners. On the Funded Partner Survey, respondents were asked why they have more contact with some funded agencies than others. As noted in the table on the previous page, agencies interact with each other if they have a pre-existing relationship, if they see an overlap in their services and objectives, or if they identify ways in which they could assist each other with resource-sharing. These criteria are balanced against the staff capacity required to initiate or maintain interagency relationships, and the geographic distance between two agencies, both of which can limit interactions.

Reading the Maps

Lines: Represent interactions between two agencies. Thick lines represent reciprocal interactions, where both agencies reported the same Collaboration Score.

Arrows: Show the direction of the interaction and whether the relationship between two agencies is reciprocal or non-reciprocal. Arrows point from the responding organization to the agency with which they report an interaction.

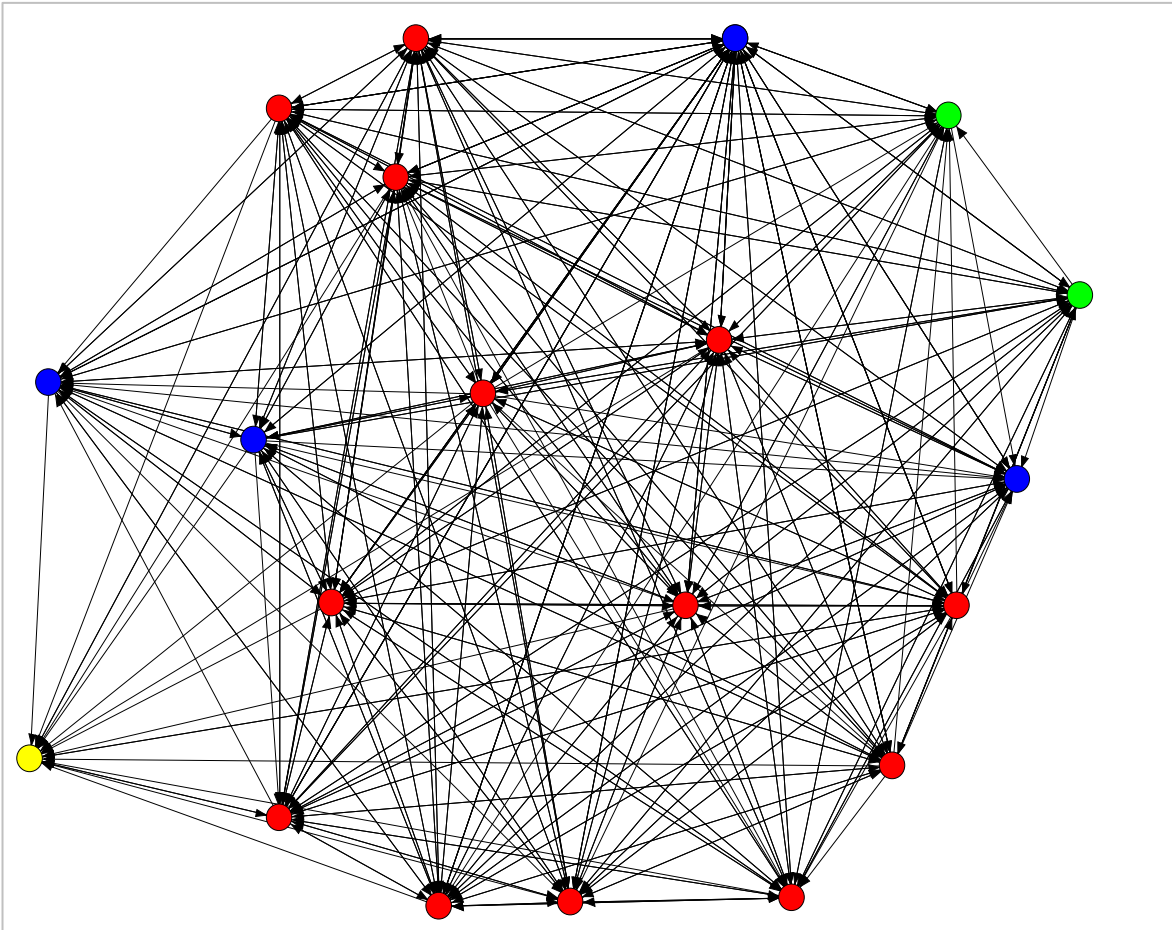
Circles: Represent the funded partner agencies in the network, or “nodes”.

Color: Represent the “closeness” of each funded partner agency. Funded partners that are closest to other agencies are shown by red circles. These are the close-knit agencies that have many interactions with different agencies and are considered to be strategically placed at the center of the network (the key players). Funded partners with lower closeness scores are shown by blue, yellow, green and finally grey circles respectively. They have fewer direct connections with other funded agencies. Those partners shown in grey have the fewest direct connections.

Overall Network of Relationships

Map 1 displays the entire network of relationships reported on the Collaboration Scale among the funded partner agencies either at the *Networking*, *Coordination*, or *Collaboration* levels of interaction.

**Map 1. Complete Network Map of Funded Partner Agencies
(n=21 agencies; no isolates)**



The color and size of each circle is related to the closeness of each agency to others in the network. The red circles represent agencies that are the closest to each other. Agencies that are close to each other are in a more central position in the network because they have the most number of direct connections with other agencies. These close-knit agencies have many interactions with different agencies and lie at the center of the network. Several agencies depicted by the blue circles are just slightly lower in their closeness to others. On the other hand, agencies that are the farthest away from each other tend to be at the periphery of the network. Those shown by yellow and green circles do not have as many direct connections to other agencies in the network.

Key Players in the Network

Map 1 shows that a select number of agencies are consistently active in interacting with the network due to their high levels of closeness—as represented by their red circles—and many of these agencies also had higher levels of interaction on the Collaboration Scale. These agencies have the shortest paths of connection to other agencies on the map and therefore have fewer “degrees of separation” from other agencies in the network. Agencies with close and strong connections like this can be described as “key players” in the network. For this reason agencies who are the closest are considered strategically located. These key agencies can facilitate the exchange of information and resources among other agencies in the network.

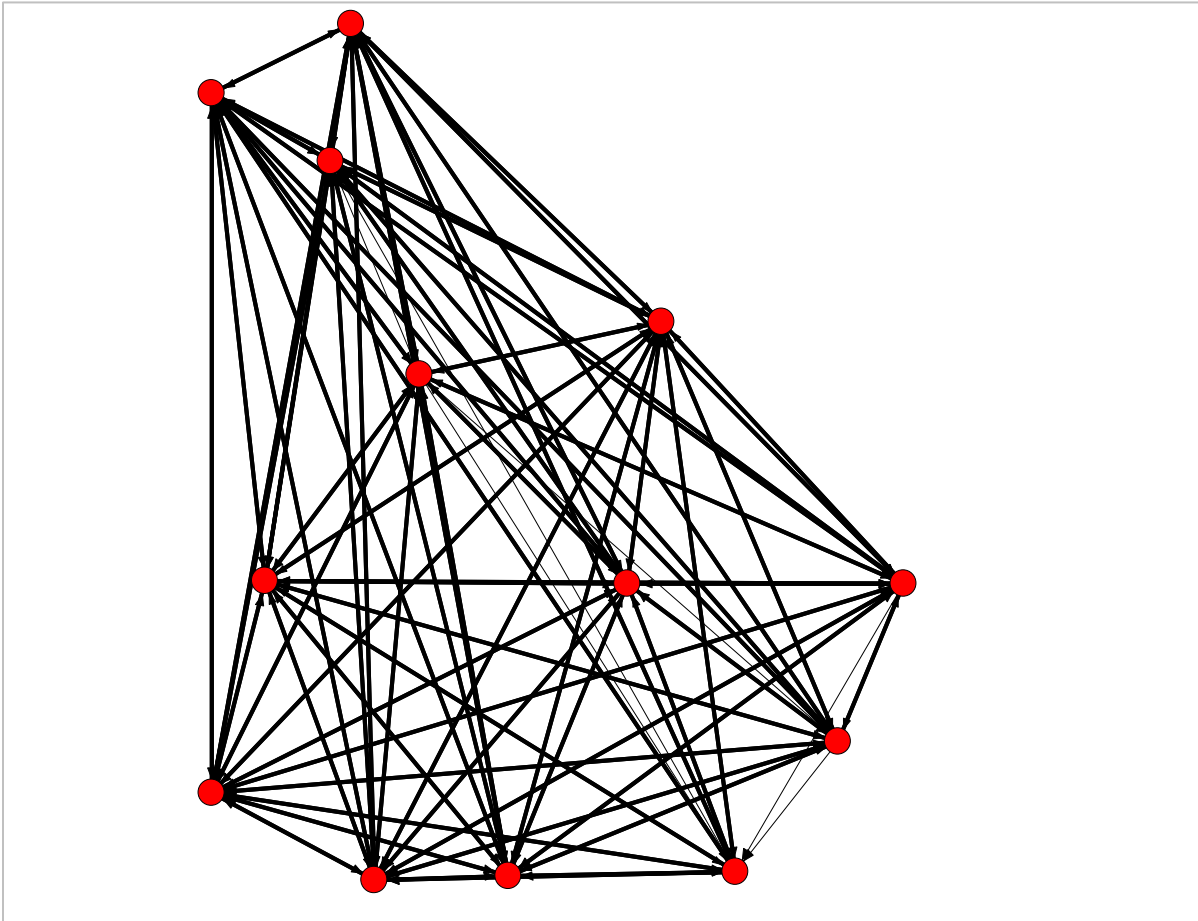
We obtain a clearer view of these “key player” agencies by only mapping those agencies that are closest to others (Map 2).

Characteristics of the “Key Players”

Key players:

- + are in a better position to serve as conduits for information and resources;
- + demonstrate high levels of “closeness” to other funded partners; and
- + exhibit higher levels of interaction on the Collaboration scale

Map 2. Key Players of Funded Partner Agencies in the Network

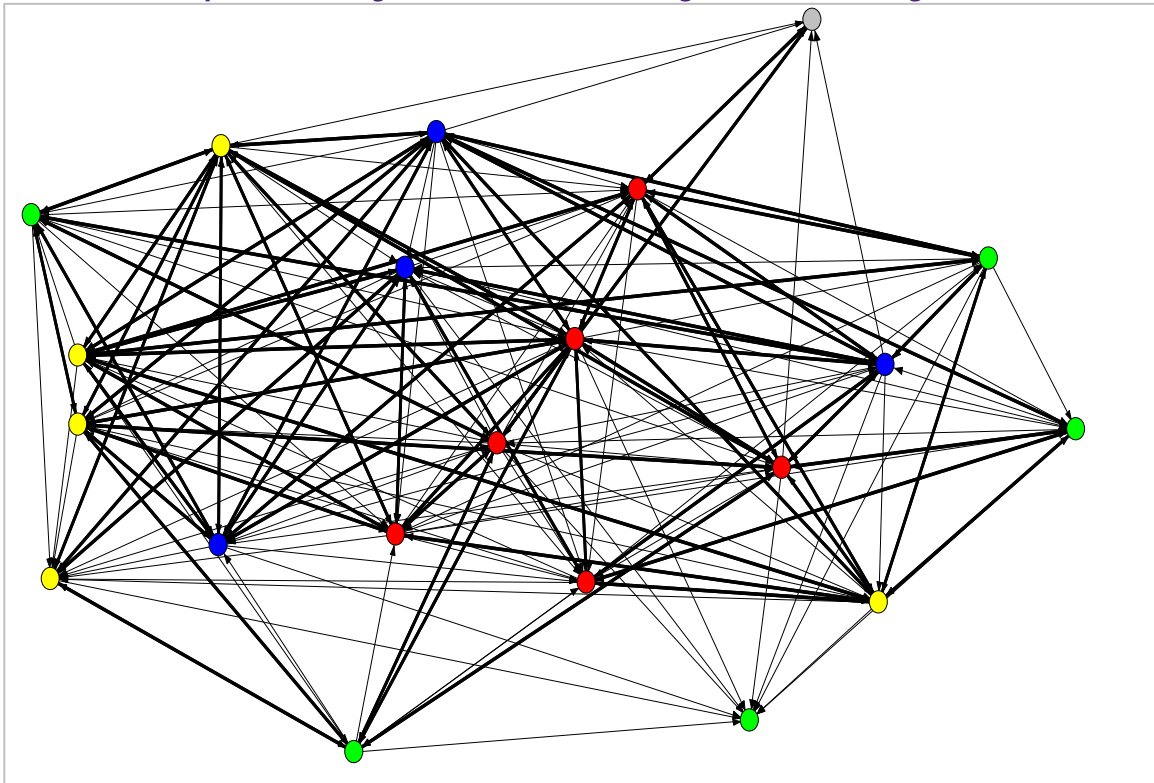


Map 2 shows 13 funded partners who are located at the center of the network—the “key players.” This map also displays the reciprocity of interactions reported by each pair of agencies. An interaction is reciprocal if both agencies report the same Collaboration Score about each other. Conversely, the interaction is considered non-reciprocal if pairs report different scores on the Collaboration Scale. For example, if Agency A rates their interaction with Agency B as *Coordination*, and Agency B also rates their interaction with Agency A as *Coordination*, then their interaction would be reciprocal. On the map, the thick lines represent reciprocal interactions. Among key players, the levels of collaboration reported by the agencies are almost entirely reciprocal, that is, they are in agreement with each other about the level of interactions they have. Reciprocity appears to be an important and unique quality of the key players, which is not found when other groups of agencies are mapped.

Network of Funded Partners Interacting at Different Levels of Collaboration

Map 3 displays the connections between funded partner agencies at the *Networking* level. This level is characterized by organizations who are aware of each other, but who communicate rarely and make decisions independently. It is the lowest level on the Collaboration scale.

Map 3. Networking Level Interactions among Funded Partner Agencies

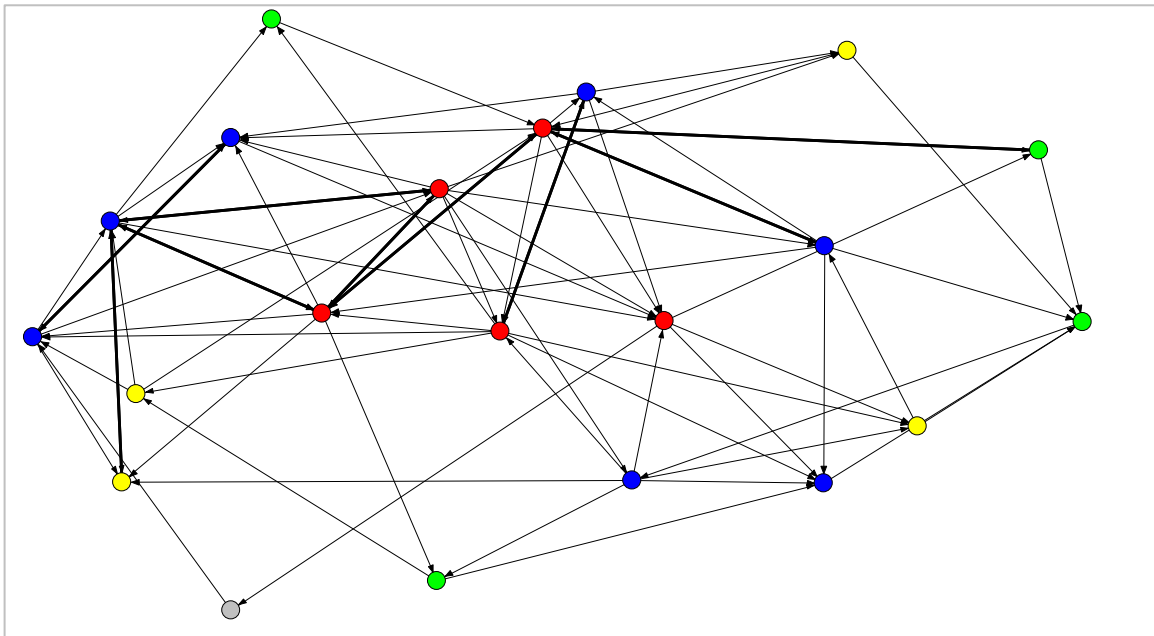


At the *Networking* level, the map for all funded partners appears very dense and appears similar to the first map that shows all levels of collaboration. This reflects the finding that most of the interactions between funded agency partners were reported at the *Networking* level. This is to be expected since *F5MC* provides its funded partners with both formal (e.g., Learning Circles and I-ACT meetings) and informal opportunities to interact with each other on a *Networking* level.

In this map several agencies in red are placed at the center of the network because they are closest to each other by virtue of having the most number of direct connections. Conversely, one agency in grey appears to be the farthest away. Agencies in blue are lower in closeness compared with those in red, but are closer than are those in yellow and green respectively. Finally, the thicker lines show that many interactions at this level are reciprocal, indicating that both agency partners identified their interactions as being at the *Networking* level.

Map 4 displays the interactions among agencies at the next level of the Collaboration Scale, *Coordination*. This level is characterized by information sharing, some defined roles, frequent communication, and some shared decision-making.

Map 4. Coordination Level Interactions among Funded Partner Agencies

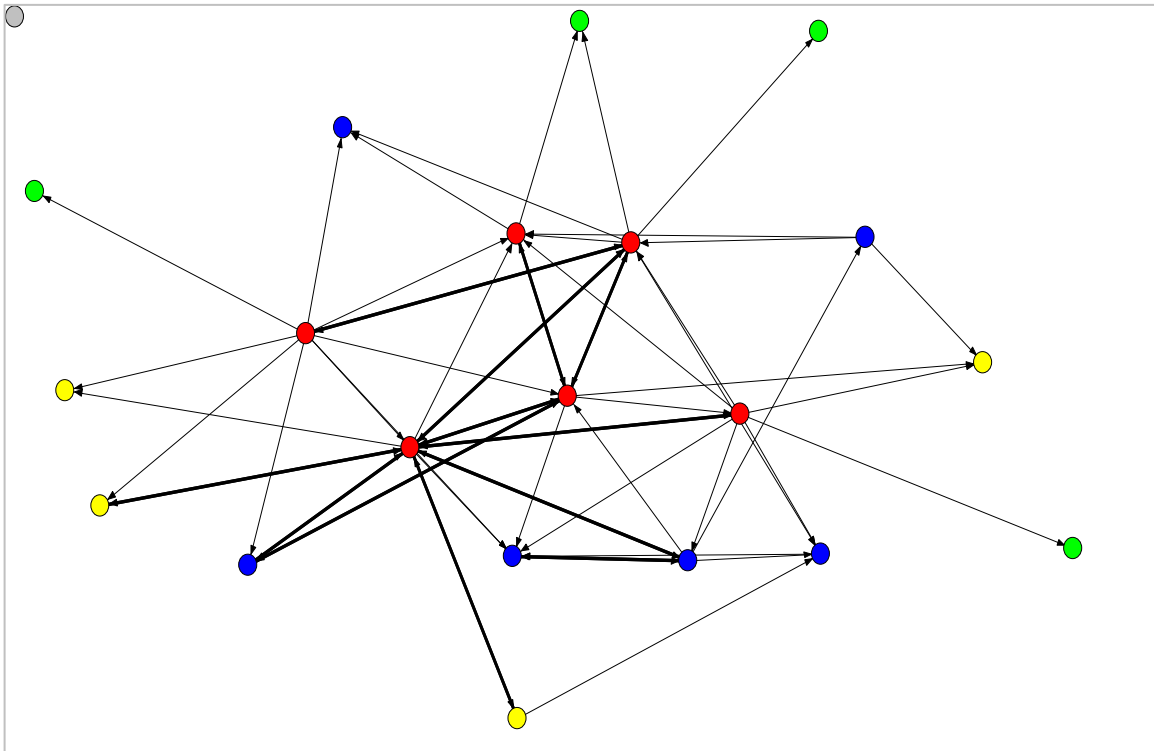


At the *Coordination* level of interaction, there are 76 interactions—fewer interactions than at the *Networking* level (Map 3). Several agencies play an important role in the network as depicted by their central location in this map (red circles). Furthermore, the map illustrates how agencies are placed in terms of their distance from each other, with decreasing closeness shown by the blue, yellow, green and finally grey circles respectively.

Map 3 also demonstrates that very few agencies report reciprocal interactions at the *Coordination* level, as shown by the relatively few thick lines linking agencies. At this level of interaction, most of the interactions are non-reciprocal in which pairs of agencies do not agree on their level of interaction. It is also noteworthy that most of the reciprocal interactions involve one or more of the “key player” agencies (red circles).

Map 5 displays the 61 interactions between the funded partners at the highest level of the Scale, *Collaboration*. At this level, organizations share ideas and resources. There is frequent communication that is characterized by mutual trust and decision-making is done jointly.

Map 5. Collaboration Level Interactions among Funded Partner Agencies



At this level, there are even fewer interactions compared to the *Networking* or *Coordination* levels. Eight agencies appear to be the best connected in terms of having *Collaborative* interactions with others (those in red). One agency, depicted in grey and shown in the upper left of the map, had no interactions at this level and is the farthest away from the other agencies. Several other agencies, shown by yellow and green circles at the periphery of the map, had only a few interactions at the level of *Collaboration*.

An important pattern is shown in this map that has not been seen at the lower levels of interactions; the network map appears to resemble a “star” in which interactions between agencies radiate outward from only a few centrally-placed agencies. A review of the literature on this topic reveals that this is a less efficient pattern for agencies in the network to interact because communications between agencies may have to go through those at the center of the star pattern. Overall, this pattern suggests both the beginnings of collaboration among funded partners, principally involving a few agencies at present, and reveals room for growth in terms of increased collaboration in the future. At this highest level of collaboration, we also see little reciprocity between agencies. In fact, most of the reciprocity shown in this map (depicted by the thicker lines) occurs between agencies at the center of the network.

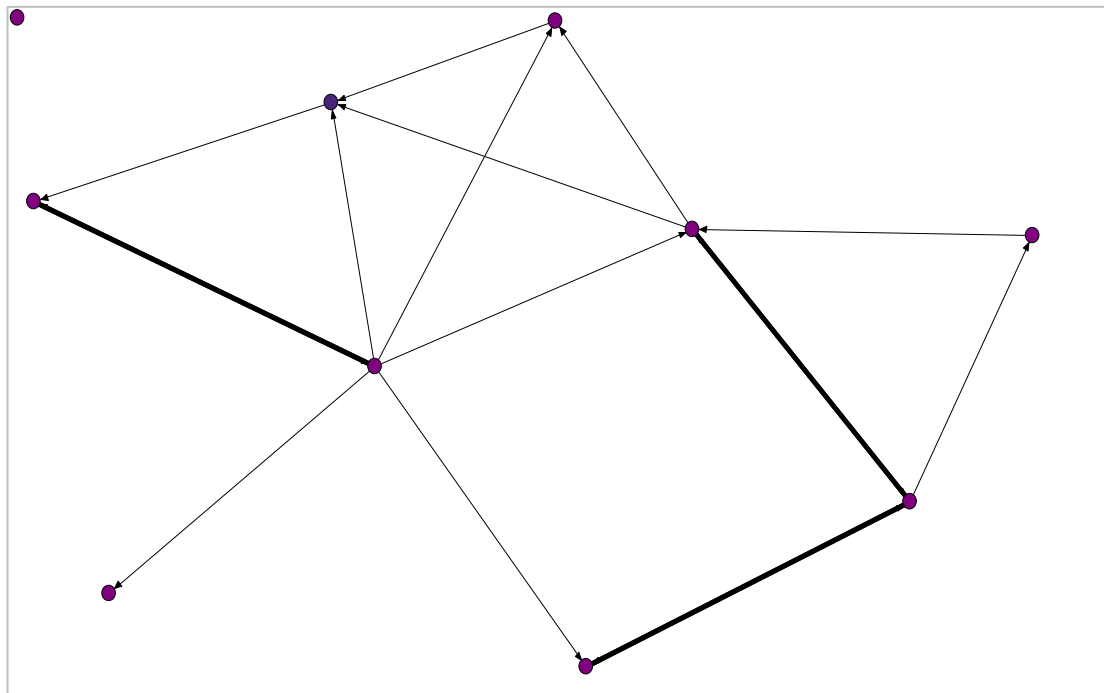
Regional Differences in Levels of Collaboration

To understand regional differences, funded partner agencies were grouped by their region of service within Monterey County.

Mapping regional differences explores whether funded partners operating in the same region share information and resources, and therefore show higher levels of interaction on the Collaboration scale. Levels of interaction may be one potential domain in which agency collaboration should increase over time if appropriate as a result of the *F5MC*-funded ELO initiative. Maps 6, 7, and 8 highlight this potential by showing interactions between funded partner agencies within a defined region at the two highest levels of the Collaboration Scale: *Coordination* and *Collaboration*. Additionally, these maps depict the dimension of reciprocity, the level of agreement between each pair of agencies of their score on the Collaboration Scale.

Map 6 shows the interactions at the *Coordination* or *Collaboration* levels between the 10 agencies serving all of Monterey County.

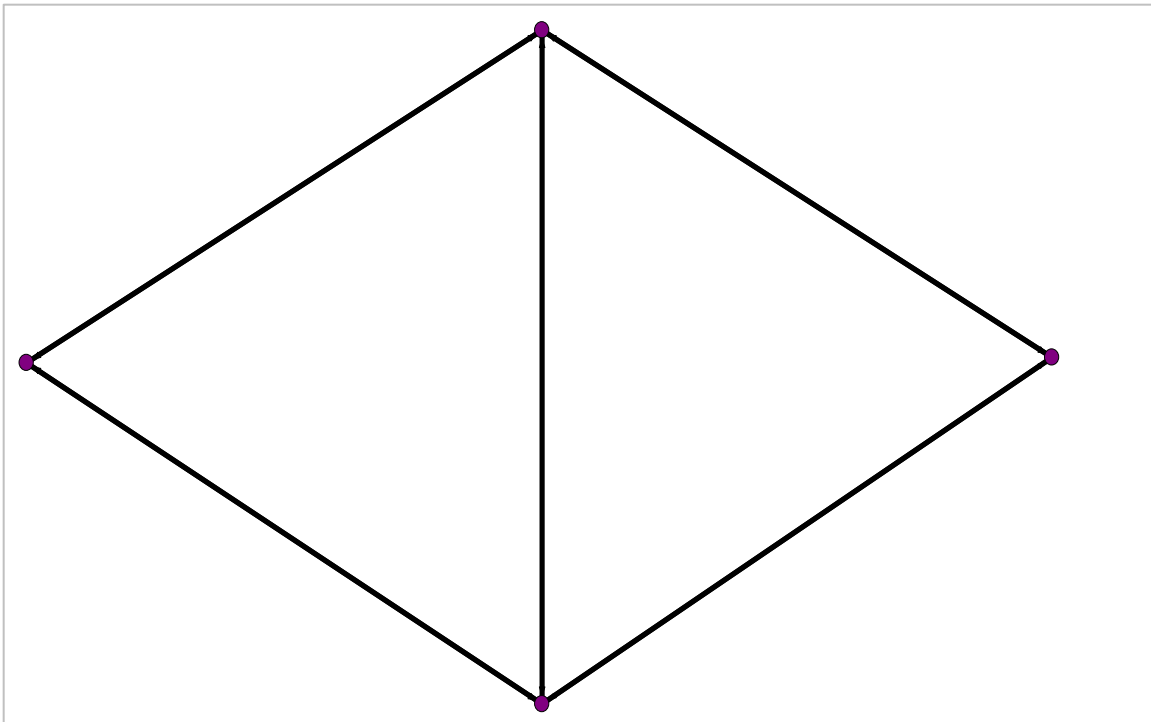
Map 6. Interactions at the *Coordination* and *Collaboration* Levels for Funded Partner Agencies Serving the Countywide Region



Nine of the ten agencies serving the entire county had at least one *Coordination* or *Collaboration* level interaction with another agency. The map shows that only a few agencies reported interactions at these levels, and most of the agencies appear to be located at the periphery of the network. Further, only three of these interactions are reciprocal. Only two agencies were connected with five others. The largest segment were only with one or two other agencies.

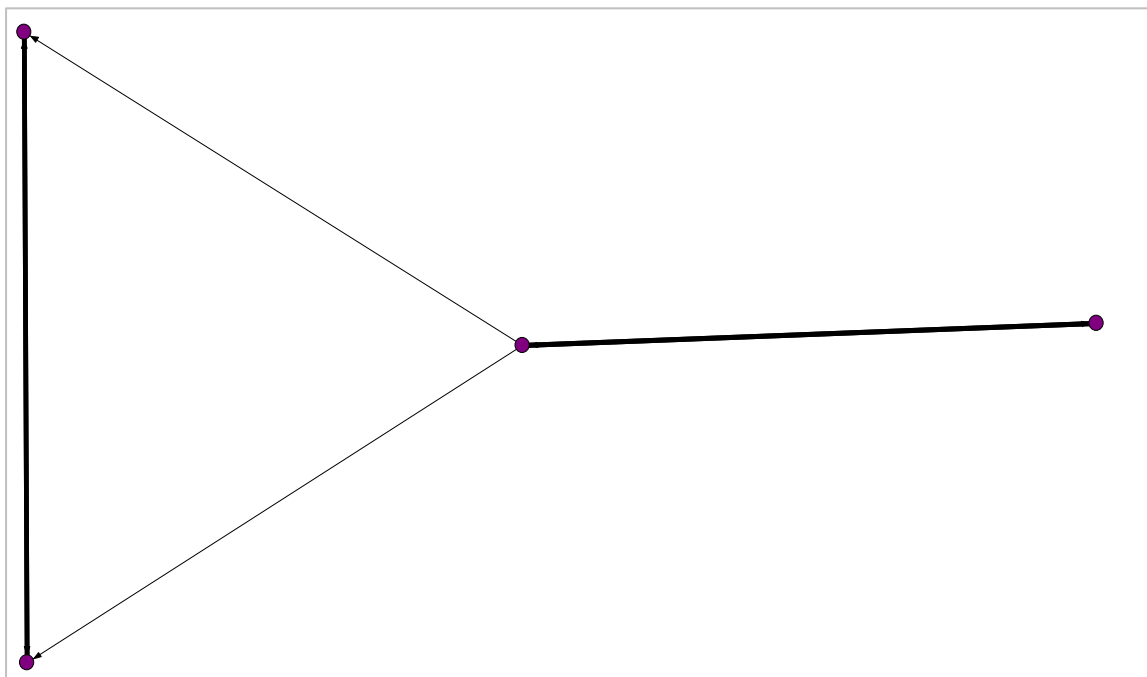
For agencies serving Salinas, the network of interactions at the *Coordination* and *Collaboration* levels are shown in Map 7. All four of the agencies appear to be connected with each other at high levels of interaction, indicating that these funded partners have close, well-established relationships. Additionally, these interactions are all reciprocal, further attesting to the levels of agreement between agencies.

Map 7. Interactions at the *Coordination* and *Collaboration* Levels for Funded Partner Agencies Serving the Salinas Region



In contrast, the map of funded agencies in South Monterey County showing *Coordination* and *Collaboration* level interactions reveals fewer of these interactions (Map 8).

Map 8. Interactions at the Coordination and Collaboration Levels for Funded Partner Agencies Serving the South Region



There are several high level interactions (at the Coordination or Collaboration levels) between these agencies serving the South region but compared with those serving Salinas, fewer were reciprocal. These agencies are aware of each other and have ongoing interactions at the Coordination level, but that there is room for the development of more Collaborative interactions.

Finally, the three agencies serving either the Peninsula or the North did not report any interactions at the *Coordination* or *Collaboration* levels (Map not shown).

Interaction Characteristics

Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which different interaction characteristics reflected their agency. The interaction characteristics rated to be most common among the agencies consisted of more general collaborative statements, such as:

- Collaborates effectively with other agencies not funded by **F5MC**
- Retains partnerships or collaborative agreements with other **F5MC**-funded partner agencies over time.
- Collaborates effectively with other **F5MC**-funded partner agencies.

However, specific activities of interactions between agencies were rated as being less common. These included such characteristics as having standard operating procedures or written memoranda of understanding with other funded agencies. Having defined roles and responsibilities with other funded agencies and sharing best

practices received somewhat higher ratings than the more intensive collaborative activities. A ranked list of all characteristics is included in the Funded Partner Survey Databook.

Changes in Interactions during FY 2007-08

When asked about changes in their interactions with other *F5MC*-funded partner agencies during FY 2007-08, responses varied depending on the type of interaction. Over 60 percent of respondents noted that the following types of interactions with other funded agencies had increased:

- Exchange of information
- Referrals to or from other agencies
- Sharing of resources

“First 5 Monterey County has linked and informed funded partners of what other agencies are doing and made suggestions on how collaboration can happen.”

– Survey respondent

However, only 32 percent of respondents reported that co-sponsorship of events had increased, and 12 percent said such co-sponsorships had decreased during the year. Similarly, 15 percent said that coordination of services with other funded agencies had decreased. Nevertheless, large majorities of respondents stated they were at least moderately satisfied both with their inter-agency relationships (80 percent) and with *F5MC*'s role in promoting such relationships (94 percent).

Future Potential

Respondents were asked which of the other *F5MC*-funded agencies they would like to work with more. The most common response (19-22 percent of respondents) was one or more of the Family Resource Centers, including King City FRC, Alisal Community FRC, Cabrillo FRC, and Castro Plaza FRC. One respondent said that the family resource centers could become key, centralized connections “because from there you could guide the clients to every other agency.”

Agencies at least 4 respondents would like to work with more	Number of respondents (n=37)
King City Family Resource Center	8
Alisal Community FRC	7
Cabrillo FRC	7
Castro Plaza FRC	7
Centro Binacional	5
Door to Hope	4
Radio Bilingüe	4

Survey respondents offered insights into what types of activities have worked well in the past to establish collaboration among the *F5MC*-funded agencies. Among 28 respondents, the most commonly identified helpful collaborative opportunities were regular meetings (36 percent), *F5MC*'s identification of agencies with common objectives or target populations (25 percent), newsletters or internet-based communications (14 percent), and face-to-face networking events (14 percent).

As summarized in the box to the left, respondents provided recommendations around promoting collaborative

Respondents Recommendations for Promoting Agency Collaboration

- + Enhance learning circles and I-ACT meetings to facilitate collaboration between agencies.
- + Increase internet-based communications.
- + Provide opportunities designated specifically for networking.

relationships among its funded agencies as well as between funded and non-funded agencies to strengthen the overall system. Among the 30 respondents who offered suggestions, 37 percent noted the value of I-ACT meetings and suggested enhancements such as including non-funded agencies in the meetings, and focusing sessions on strategic networking and collaboration opportunities between agencies with common goals. Increasing communications was another common theme, with a typical respondent giving the suggestion to “highlight the work of a few agencies every month in an email newsletter.” Many also felt that *F5MC* could provide more opportunities expressly for networking purposes and include non-funded agencies.

Thirteen percent, though, indicated that *F5MC* current activities are sufficient and need no change.

Part 3: ELO Essential Characteristics

In order to develop effective programs and services, the community identified the following program Essential Characteristics in the ELO Strategic Plan: 1) culturally and linguistically appropriate services; 2 and 3) flexible hours and community-based services; 4) family-centered services; and 5) coordinated services. Each characteristic was analyzed first based on the perceptions of individual respondents. Then an analysis at the level of the agency was conducted in which responses from all survey respondents from the same agency were combined. The purpose of analyzing data at the agency level was to study the degree to which funded partner agencies were meeting the criteria for each Essential Characteristic.

#1: Culturally & Linguistically Appropriate Services

Services in different languages. The *F5MC*-funded agencies serve culturally-diverse populations, and often provide services in multiple languages. Of the 21 agencies, the percent that offer services in different languages is shown in the table at right. Most reported offering services and program activities in Spanish and English.

Percent of Funded Agencies Offering Services in Different Languages (n=21)		
Language	% offering any service , including referrals	% offering primary program activities
Spanish	95	86
English	86	86
Triqui	24	14
Mixteco	19	14
Other language(s)	10	5

Cultural similarity between staff and target populations.

Survey respondents were asked whether program staff reflect the cultural backgrounds of the populations served. Most reported that they had staff who reflected Latino (97 percent) and white (85 percent) populations. However, only about half or fewer respondents said that staff reflected indigenous (including indigenous Mexican), African American, Asian, or Pacific Islander populations.

Bilingual staff. The majority of staff members at the funded agencies, including volunteers, have bilingual capacity. When no staff person on hand speaks a client’s language, agencies try to accommodate them through a variety of means. Among 24 survey respondents who noted specific accommodations, 37 percent reported

that staff at their agency makes arrangements with an outside interpreter when a language barrier comes up. Outside interpreters include staff at a partner agency, telephone interpreter services, and community volunteers, among others. Nineteen percent of respondents stated that the client is called back later by a staff person who speaks their language. Another 15 percent reported that their agency provides written materials in the client's language if no staff person speaks that language, and a few respondents (11 percent) said that they refer such clients to another agency.

Cultural competency activities. Activities that demonstrate cultural competence include outreach or marketing to culturally-specific populations, holding staff trainings on the topic, and soliciting community input on needs and program design. Although 84 percent of respondents report that their agency reaches out to specific populations on a quarterly basis or more often, more than one in four (28 percent) state that their agency never trains its staff in cultural competency. In other words, four funded agencies do not provide cultural competency training for staff, according to survey respondents (two respondents from an additional agency had responses that did not match as to whether the agency provided any cultural competency training).

Findings for Essential Characteristics #1 suggest that a majority of funded partners are serving culturally diverse populations and the staff that serves them largely reflect Latino and white populations. However, only half of respondents reported that staff reflect other cultural backgrounds (e.g., indigenous Mexican populations). Additionally, funded partners appear to be providing services in multiple languages with a majority of staff indicating bilingual capacity. Although a majority of agencies indicate providing outreach to specific populations, one fourth reported not providing their staff with cultural competency training.

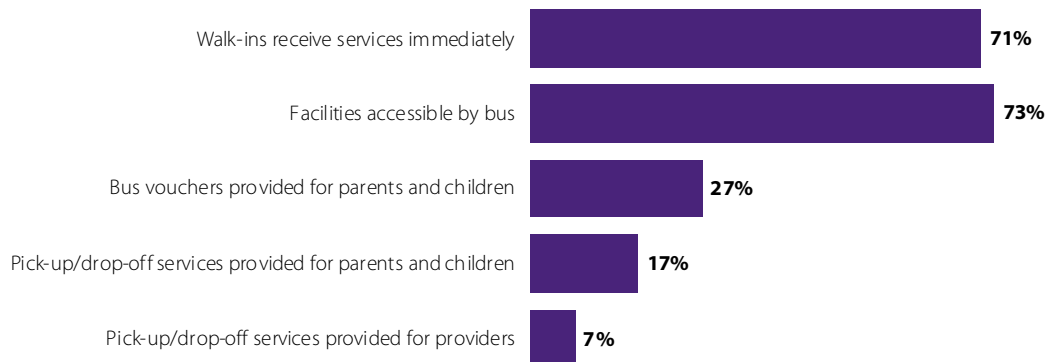
#2 and #3: Flexible Hours & Community-based Services

Service location and availability. Respondents reported that services are available and provided “often” or “as needed” at many different locations, including at their program’s facilities (83 percent), at school sites (73 percent), at community fairs or other public spaces (66 percent), at another program’s facilities (62 percent), and in clients’ homes (60 percent). Agencies offer services at different times of the day or week, as shown by the following percentages of the 20 agencies that provided this information:

- Weekday mornings, (85 percent)
- Weekday afternoons, (75 percent)
- Weekday evenings, (80 percent)
- Weekends, (80 percent)
- Year-round, (75 percent)
- On-call or by appointment, (75 percent)

Accessibility. As shown in the chart below, nearly three quarters of respondents report that their services are available immediately to “walk-in” clients, and that their facilities are close to bus lines. Fewer are proactive about helping families with transportation needs, such as providing bus vouchers (27 percent) or rides (17 percent). When asked which bus lines clients could use to access their facilities, respondents most often reported that Monterey-Salinas Transit buses provided access while two respondents also noted Greyhound.

Percent of Respondents Reporting Characteristics of Accessibility



Barriers to access. Survey respondents were asked how often their clients faced various barriers to accessing services. Although the majority of respondents did not indicate many barriers “most” or “all of the time,” some reported that the following barriers are challenges for their clients “most” or “all of the time”:

- Lack of transportation services, (39 percent)
- Population moves due to seasonal agricultural work, (33 percent)
- Services are not provided where the target population lives, (20 percent)
- The community lacks knowledge of funded agencies and their services, (20 percent)

The service providers who responded reported that the potential barriers of clients distrusting local service providers and lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate services were the least widespread of the challenges considered.

Findings from Essential Characteristics #2 indicate that funded agencies are providing services at various locations, including program’s facilities and school sites, and offer services at different times of the day and week (e.g., weekday mornings and evenings and weekends). Moreover, findings suggest that most services are available immediately to “walk-in” clients and that program facilities are close to bus lines. However, findings also imply that there are barriers that prevent some clients from accessing services, including lack of transportation services, clients moving due to seasonal agricultural work, and a lack of knowledge of community supports.

#4: Family-centered Services

Services offered for families. Survey respondents were asked to describe the services available for children ages 0-5, parents, and whole families at their agencies. Among 30 respondents representing 20 agencies, 70 percent reported having services targeted to parents, two thirds of respondents reported providing services specifically for children ages 0-5, and half described services that included a larger age range or multiple family members. Most of the funded agencies reported having services available for all members of a nuclear family with young children: 74 percent of respondents reported that their program’s facilities have services or activities available for a mother, a father, a 2-year-old child, and a 5-year-old child. The types of services offered are shown in the table below.

Types of Services at Funded Agencies		
For Children 0-5	For Parents	For Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ child care, playgroups, respite care ▪ literacy sessions ▪ preschool ▪ availability of toys or child care during parent services ▪ lending of toys or books ▪ screenings and assessment for health, development, and mental health ▪ car seat giveaways ▪ backpack giveaways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ referrals ▪ parenting classes ▪ general adult education, including ESL ▪ assistance with applications (health insurance, food stamps) ▪ information related to parenting ▪ case management ▪ radio shows about parenting ▪ substance abuse treatment ▪ emergency assistance ▪ financial management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ parent-child classes and activities ▪ home visits ▪ mental health services ▪ oral health services, including screening, education, and giveaways ▪ other health services ▪ family literacy ▪ youth programs ▪ teen parent services

Parent involvement. Although respondents from five (24 percent) agencies of 20 reported that parents are not formally involved in their funded programs, others identified a variety of ways in which parents are involved. Most commonly, parents provide feedback on program design or implementation (76 percent). Parents also hold positions on advisory committees (52 percent) and serve as program volunteers (48 percent) or mentors (33 percent).

Findings suggest that most of the funded agencies have services available for all members of a nuclear family with young children and that most encourage parents to provide feedback on the design and implementation of programs. However, a quarter of funded agencies reported not formally involving parents in their funded program.

#5: Coordinated Services

Although almost half of respondents (47 percent) said that duplication of services for children 0-5 and their families occurs “rarely” within their communities, one in three (33 percent) reported that duplication does happen “sometimes,” while another 17 percent reported they do not know how often duplication occurs. None of the respondents reported duplication occurring “often.” Respondents were asked how duplication could best be avoided. Two related suggestions were common: (1) increase record-keeping and information sharing, and (2) improve coordination of services through better communication and collaboration among agencies. Two respondents, however, indicated that duplication of some services is a positive thing. One explained that it is a benefit to families to have multiple options of providers, and the other pointed out that some services are appropriate to duplicate, stating, “We encourage duplication of prevention education.” For more information regarding coordination of services please refer to Part 2: Relationships and Collaboration among Funded Partners.

Respondent Recommendations for Additional Focus on ELO Essential Characteristics

- + Increase efforts to recruit staff reflective of diverse client populations.
- + Regularly train staff in cultural competency.
- + Explore new transportation options for clients, such as van services shared among agencies.
- + Facilitate cross-agency sharing of information and ideas.

Part 4: Program Development & Sustainability

Program Capacity Changes during FY 2007-08

Most respondents reported that both evaluation capacity and organizational capacity increased during FY 2007-08. Respondents were asked whether their agency’s ability to conduct four different evaluation activities had increased (shown in the box at right.) Sixteen of the 21 agencies (76 percent) increased capacity on all four activities, but three agencies (14 percent) had increased capacity on none of them. Three different organizational capacity activities were also rated by respondents. Eighteen agencies (86 percent) reported increases on at least two of the three items. One agency reported increases on all three items.

Program Capacity Activities

Program-level evaluation

- Develop and implement evaluation plans
- Create or identify data collection instruments
- Collect outcome data
- Analyze and report data

Organizational capacity

- Adequate staff activities
- Successfully assess organizational structure
- Enhance management and administrative structure to successfully carry out activities

When asked what *F5MC* could do to improve programs' capacity to conduct program-level evaluation, six respondents (30 percent) indicated that *F5MC* needed to do nothing further. Another 30 percent stated that they needed more assistance with data tracking and developing an ongoing evaluation system. The third most common response (20 percent) was that more funding was needed for evaluation staff and evaluation-related activities.

Sustainability Efforts

Nearly two thirds of respondents (61 percent, n=19) reported being very satisfied while almost one third of respondents (29 percent, n=9) reported being moderately satisfied with the efforts of *F5MC* to increase the sustainability of funded organizations. Two out of three respondents (62 percent) also said that these sustainability activities had had either "a good deal" or "a lot" of impact on their agencies. In particular, 42 percent of respondents reported that sustainability planning activities had worked best to improve their agency's sustainability. Others identified working with an outside consultant (23 percent) and increased funding (or efforts to increase funding, 19 percent) as the most effective sustainability efforts.

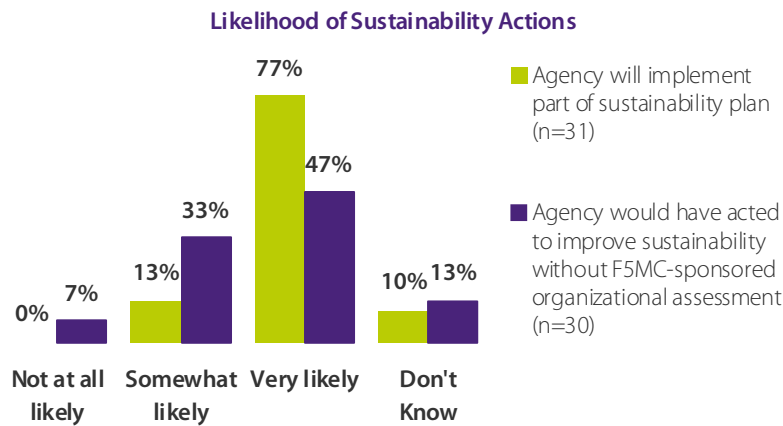
Survey data revealed that some funded agencies were able to grow their sources of financial support during fiscal year 2007-08, while most others experienced no change in this area (see table to the right). The highest percent of positive change occurred in agencies' abilities to apply for non-First 5 grant funding (55 percent).

Respondent Recommendations for Program Development & Sustainability

- + Help programs develop more sustainable evaluation systems.
- + Provide technical assistance to help programs implement sustainability plans.
- + Identify ways for agencies to expand and diversify funding streams.

Agency's ability to...	Positive Change	No Change	Negative Change
apply for other grant funding not through First 5 (n=18)	55%	39%	6%
secure other funding (n=17)	47%	47%	6%
secure donations or in-kind support (n=16)	44%	56%	-
create fee-for-service mechanisms (n=15)	27%	73%	-

As shown in the bar graph below, 77 percent of respondents predicted that their agency would very likely implement part of their sustainability plan, and 47 percent felt sustainability would very likely have improved without *F5MC's* sponsored organizational assessment. Looking forward, respondents stated that they will need further technical assistance and outside consulting regarding sustainability (31 percent), and will need help acquiring additional funding (19 percent).

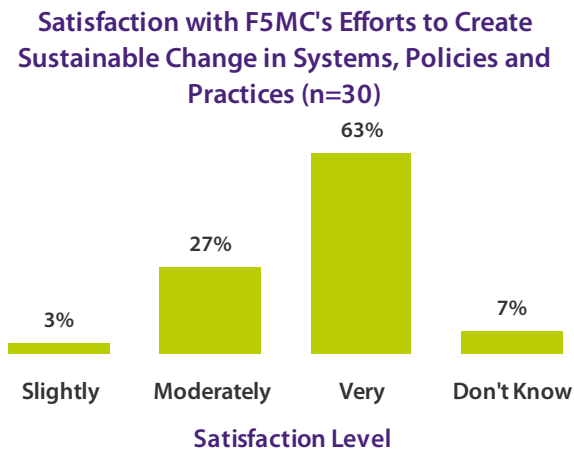


Part 5: Interactions with First 5 Monterey County Staff & Commission

The vast majority of survey respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that *F5MC* staff are responsive to inquiries (91 percent, n=31) and act in the best interest of young children and families (94 percent, n=31). While most also report that communication with staff has been clear, 13 percent report that it has not been clear.

Satisfaction with *F5MC's* efforts and interactions with funded agencies is high, as shown in the bar graph at right.

When it comes to satisfaction with technical assistance offered by *F5MC*, respondents were then asked to rate the quality of their technical assistance in several areas. The table shows the percentage of respondents who rated *F5MC* “good” or “excellent” in each area of technical assistance. According to the table, a high percentage of respondents rated *F5MC* as “good” or “excellent” on the following technical assistance areas:



- The development of agencies’ scopes of work (84 percent)
- Aggregate data and evaluation reporting (66 percent)
- Funded agencies’ budgets (64 percent)
- Sustainability plan development (64 percent)

One type of technical assistance received moderately lower ratings compared to other forms of technical assistance. Thirteen percent of respondents reported that support for designing appropriate child development activities was “fair,” while 46 percent reported it was “good” or “excellent.”

Respondents report high satisfaction with the Commission, with over 87 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that *F5MC* is respected, the Commission seeks the input of parents and caregivers when making decisions (74 percent), and that their program has sufficient opportunity to provide input regarding decisions that affect them (65 percent). Some respondents reported lower levels of satisfaction with the *F5MC* Commission, with 12 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement that the Commission seeks the input of parents and caregivers when making decisions, and fewer than half (48 percent) agreeing that Commission meetings are accessible to the public.

Suggestions offered by respondents to improve *F5MC* staff and Commission relations with the community and funded programs included the following:

- *F5MC* staff could engage with programs more directly by inviting input from parents through idea boxes at agency sites.
- Commissioners could be more effective representatives if they visited program sites, met participating families, and attended funded programs’ events.
- The Commission could increase its influence among both funded and non-funded agencies by further ensuring that children ages 0-5 are considered not as an isolated group, but in the context of issues—and initiatives—that span different ages.
- Commission members would ideally ensure that the composition (i.e., membership) of the Commission include people who provide direct services to families (e.g., line staff) and represent the areas of the county designated by First 5 as priority areas. The Commission could also be supplemented as needed with advisory groups on specific issues.
- The Commission and staff could take more opportunities to highlight accomplishments of the funded programs.

Respondent Recommendations for *F5MC* Interactions with Funded Agencies

- + Actively solicit suggestions and input from programs and parents.
- + Increase Commissioners’ interaction and visibility with programs and parents.
- + Look for opportunities to increase communication with agencies and the general public.

Part 6: Special Needs Systems

Special Needs Services: Awareness and Referrals

Survey respondents were asked about their agency’s activities to help children demonstrating developmental delays and special needs receive appropriate services. The table below shows that while most respondents state their agency is aware of special needs programs and services (84 percent) and that most refer children to these programs (68 percent), 16 percent of respondents did not know whether their agency met these criteria. Another 16 percent reported that their agency did not engage in referring families to special needs services. In addition, one quarter (25 percent) of those responding said that referred families did not know the outcomes of referrals.

Although a few of *F5MC*'s funded partners have little direct interaction with families of young children (for example if their primary audience is service providers or their service is provided through radio) the data indicate an opportunity for improved awareness and action around special needs. Specifically:

- Agencies can ensure that all staff who work with families with young children are aware of special needs programs and services, and can provide referral services to families as needed.
- Agencies can establish follow-up and information-sharing procedures with the programs to which they provide referrals, helping prevent families from slipping through the cracks without receiving the services they need.

Special Needs Activity	Percent of Respondents Reporting		
	Yes	No	Don't Know
Agency is aware of programs and services for children 0-5 who demonstrate developmental delays and special needs. (n=31)	84	0	16
Agency refers children who demonstrate developmental delays and special needs, and their families. (n=31)	68	16	16
These referred children have been able to receive appropriate services by other programs. (n=20)	70	5	25

Special Needs Service Duplication

Although 19 percent of respondents said that duplication of services “sometimes” occurs for children demonstrating developmental delays or special needs, 42 percent said they did not know whether it happens and more than one-third reported that duplication “rarely” happens (36 percent). One respondent noted that it is “often very difficult to get services”. The only suggestion for avoiding duplication of such services was to increase information sharing among the programs that provide special needs services. Information-sharing might also increase providers’ awareness of duplication, since many do not know whether or not it occurs.

Respondent Recommendations for Improving Special Needs Systems

- + Train agency staff in awareness of and referrals to special needs services.
- + Create information-sharing procedures between agencies.

Discussion and Recommendations

Network mapping analysis allows for the examination of the current system of relationships and interactions among funded partners and will assess changes in the system over time. In this baseline year, the findings suggest that funded partners are highly connected to each other at the level of *Networking*, suggesting room for change towards greater levels of interaction among funded partners in the future. There is also a group of funded partners that appear to be more closely connected within the network. In addition, funded partners serving Salinas appear especially well-connected with other agencies serving the same region.

Findings from the Funded Partner Survey also suggest that *F5MC* effectively supports program development and sustainability among its funded partners, and has continued to maintain highly satisfactory relationships with funded partners. Moreover, findings reveal that the funded agencies are addressing Essential Program Characteristics which are a means for developing effective quality programs and services. Lastly, findings also indicate that most funded partners are aware of programs and services for children with special needs and that most are referring children to these programs.

F5MC may wish to consider the following recommendations to enhance the system of services for the young children and their families:

- + **Convene funded partners to engage in a deliberative process aimed at identifying conditions that would support building more and stronger collaborative relationships. *F5MC* and funded partners may benefit from coming together to discuss the following issues:**
 - Exploring what funded partners need in order to engage in more collaborative activities, such as co-sponsoring of events, establishing memorandums of understanding, and sharing resources.
 - Increasing internet-based communications
 - Providing opportunities designated specifically for networking
 - Engaging funded partners in the Peninsula, North County and South County in a dialogue to develop a plan to strengthen collaborative interactions.
 - Identifying what roles the “key players” can play to support building the funded partner network including increasing collaborative interactions, and capacity building in identifying.

- + **Facilitate a dialogue between *F5MC* and funded programs designed to effectively address specific aspects of the ELO Essential Program Characteristics.** Findings from the evaluation suggest that programs would benefit from regular staff training in cultural competency, increased efforts to recruit staff reflective of diverse client populations, an in-depth exploration of the barriers that prevent some clients from accessing services (e.g., lack of transportation options), and cross-agency sharing of information to reduce service duplication.

- + **Enhance *F5MC* interactions with funded partner agencies and the community.** *F5MC* Commission may enhance its interactions with its funded partners by providing more opportunities to different constituent groups (e.g., direct service providers) to become involved in Commission activities, increasing Commissioners’ interaction and visibility with programs and parents, and identifying opportunities to increase communication with agencies and the general public.

- + **Collaborate with programs working with children with special needs and their families to improve the special needs system.** Evaluation results indicate that it would be useful to train agency staff in awareness of and referrals to special needs services and to facilitate information sharing procedures between agencies in order to raise awareness about services for children with special needs.

Recommendations

The *F5MC* 2007-08 Evaluation Report serves as a rich source of information to track client and service delivery data, program implementation, and systems change over time. One of the primary purposes of this evaluation report is to provide practical recommendations to *F5MC* and its funded partners in order to continue improving the lives of young children and the system of services available to young children and their families in Monterey County. This final section presents a summary of key recommendations presented throughout the report.

Client-Level Recommendations

Recommendations for *F5MC*

- + **Monitor client and service delivery data on a quarterly or semi-annual basis in order to help funded partners make appropriate program adjustments.**

Recommendations for Funded Partners

- + **Adjust outreach and recruitment methods to achieve target client and service objectives.**
- + **Create a workplan to ensure thorough and complete reporting in the Persimmony data system.**

Playgroup Program Implementation Recommendations

Program Implementation Recommendations

- + **Facilitate a discussion between *F5MC* and funded programs, as well as within funded programs, aimed at sharing information and identifying promising practices with respect to some of the findings presented in this report.** Program coordinators and line staff may benefit from coming together to discuss how programs approach the following issues:
 - Staffing issues, including recruiting qualified staff versed in child development and parent-child interactions, ensuring new and existing staff receive timely training opportunities, ensuring appropriate staffing levels needed to accommodate higher participation levels in the playgroups.
 - Providing quality early learning environments, including incorporating quality and age-appropriate playgroup settings and accommodating mixed ages.
 - Increasing parent participation, including obtaining parent input to identify hours and days that maximize parent participation, and supporting involvement of fathers and grandparents.
 - Culturally and linguistically appropriate services, including addressing parents' level of education and language, and developing integration strategies for families from non-dominant cultures.

- Ongoing access to experts who can provide onsite guidance and technical assistance with regard to playgroup implementation.
- + **Explore ways to strengthen the connection between home visitation programs and playgroups.** A review of the literature on home visitation indicates that program effects are strongest when integrated with other service components. *F5MC* and funded partners may want to consider ways to increase playgroup participation of families receiving home visits.

Evaluation-Level Recommendations

- + **Future evaluation activities might explore why parents choose to participate in playgroups with their children, including whether playgroups are filling service gaps and/or to promote positive parent-child interactions.** Findings from this exploratory assessment suggest that playgroups may be addressing gaps associated with temporary closure of early education programs due to seasonal schedules or the permanent closure of a local preschool. It would also be useful to understand why families choose to participate in playgroups.
- + **Future evaluation activities might explore the level of family participation in playgroups and other services such as home visits, to the extent feasible.** It would be useful to 1) examine the characteristics of families receiving different types of interventions in order to understand potential differences in who is being served, and 2) study whether differences in implementation within and among programs influence parents' level of satisfaction and parent and child outcomes.

Systems-Level Recommendations

- + **Convene funded partners to engage in a deliberative process aimed at identifying conditions that would support building more and stronger collaborative relationships.** *F5MC* and funded partners may benefit from coming together to discuss the following issues:
 - Exploring what funded partners need in order to engage in more collaborative activities, such as co-sponsoring of events, establishing memorandums of understanding, and sharing resources.
 - Increasing internet-based communications
 - Providing opportunities designated specifically for networking
 - Engaging funded partners in the Peninsula, North County and South County in a dialogue to develop a plan to strengthen collaborative interactions.
 - Identifying what roles the “key players” can play to support building the funded partner network including increasing collaborative interactions, and capacity building in identifying.
- + **Facilitate a dialogue between *F5MC* and funded programs designed to effectively address specific aspects of the ELO Essential Program Characteristics.** Findings from the evaluation suggest that programs would benefit from regular staff training in cultural competency, increased efforts to recruit staff reflective of diverse client populations, an in-depth exploration of the barriers that prevent some clients from accessing services (e.g., lack of transportation options), and cross-agency sharing of information to reduce service duplication.
- + **Enhance *F5MC* interactions with funded partner agencies and the community.** *F5MC* Commission may enhance its interactions with its funded partners by providing more opportunities to different

constituent groups (e.g., direct service providers) to become involved in Commission activities, increasing Commissioners' interaction and visibility with programs and parents, and identifying opportunities to increase communication with agencies and the general public.

- + **Collaborate with programs working with children with special needs and their families to improve the special needs system.** Evaluation results indicate that it would be useful to train agency staff in awareness of and referrals to special needs services and to facilitate information sharing procedures between agencies in order to raise awareness about services for children with special needs.

Appendix

The Appendix provides information related to the overarching evaluation approach and methods.

Overarching Evaluation Approach and Methods

As mentioned in the Introduction, the new evaluation framework comprises a sequenced approach in which earlier stages of the evaluation will set the groundwork for later stages, where more rigorous evaluation activities will take place. Overall, the methods Harder+Company Community Research uses in this four-year evaluation will assess the effects of the funded partners in providing services to families and children according to the ELO Community Visions and Outcomes.

This section details those methods and approaches that were used to produce the findings documented in this report. Chapter 1 was based on the first stage of the evaluation framework, that is, to describe families and children who received services from *F5MC*-funded partners and the kinds of services that were provided. Chapter 2 presents the baseline level results of a the Program Implementation Case Study involving a subset of funded partners to document how well these programs are implemented, particularly the funded playgroups. Finally, Chapter 3 describes the network of funded partners' interactions, as part of the Systems Change Evaluation. Listed below is a description of the methods used at each of the three stages of the approved Evaluation Framework.

Stage 1: Client-Level Data

This stage is designed to answer several key evaluation questions, as follows:

- Are funded partners reaching the appropriate target populations?
- Who and how many are being served?
- What services are being offered?

In order to describe the characteristics of families and children served by the funded partners, and to describe the services being provided, the first stage of the evaluation involves the development of a systematic collection of client-specific service-utilization data. A capable Management Information System for funded partners will be able to document client characteristics, service delivery processes, and client recruitment and selection. During this past year, *F5MC* awarded a contract to Persimmony as the IT contractor who is developing this for *F5MC* and its funded partners.

One of the key tasks in design was to identify the indicators to be captured by the client-level data system. The Evaluation Team supported the *F5MC* Evaluation Officer and the *F5MC* Evaluation Advisory Committee in reviewing and revising a set of indicators. All parents receiving services from a *F5MC*-funded partner will be asked, at program intake, to consent to participate in the evaluation. After a parent consents to participate in the evaluation, a core set of variables will be collected through an optional *F5MC* Intake Form and entered into the new data system. Many providers already utilize their own intake forms and will have the option of continuing to use that form with the new data system. The information captured by funded partners was finalized after discussions with *F5MC* and the Evaluation Advisory Committee. The ELO indicator matrix

summarizing the set of common variables that will be collected through the data system for all funded partners is presented in the table below.

Stage 1 Evaluation F5MC ELO Indicator Matrix

Dimensions	Indicators
Family Structure and Social Capital	Client name; Date of birth; Gender; Consent date; Address; Phone number(s); Race/ethnicity; Parents’ level of education and training; Primary language; Zip code; Health insurance status; Dental insurance status; Special needs; History of First 5 services
Service Delivery Processes	Client attrition; Duration and length of service; Total numbers served (service counts); Referrals made and received; Types of services and activities received

However, since the new Persimmony database recently came online in June of 2008, this evaluation report relies on funded partner tri-annual reports to report on service delivery data and client demographics. While data on clients served are the best available, they may in some cases be incomplete, inaccurate or inconsistent. Additionally, there are no unique identifiers used for clients so numbers may be duplicative of people receiving services multiple times. It is important to note that for each service type, the numbers *within each service type* (e.g., case management, parent education) are “unduplicated,” meaning that each client is counted only once. However, the *total number of clients* served is “duplicated,” meaning that clients were counted more than once if they accessed more than one type of service. The fiscal year 2008-09 report will include client-level data entered and stored in the Persimmony MIS. The Persimmony MIS will increase precision by collecting unduplicated client-level characteristics, services received and referrals made.

Stage 2: Program-Level Implementation and Outcome Evaluation

The second stage of the *F5MC* evaluation of Early Learning Opportunities is designed to answer the following questions:

- Have individual programs and ELO as a whole improved the lives of children and families?
- How do impacts vary across programs? What factors account for variation?
- Are funded partners providing developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate services?

This stage focuses on program-level implementation outcome data as well as the measurement of cross-cutting outcome indicators. Program-level implementation and outcome-level data collected by the Evaluation Team were documented through a case study in order to identify changes in children and families as a result of their participation in a particular *F5MC*-funded program.

A second component of this evaluation stage focused on the measurement of cross-cutting outcome indicators that reflect changes likely to occur among parents and children across all of the *F5MC*-funded programs. Cross-cutting outcome indicators involve the measurement of program outcomes through a prospective longitudinal design, and represent the centerpiece of the ELO evaluation. However, this component will begin during the second year of the evaluation and thus will not be described here.

During the first year of the evaluation, FY2007-2008, the Evaluation Team conducted the implementation case study. The case study involved selecting a subset of funded partners who were implementing playgroup

services. The purpose of the case study was to document how programs implemented playgroup activities and to highlight the impact of these activities on the children and families served.

Research has shown that levels of program implementation can be highly variable, and poor implementation can often explain the lack of positive results in many outcome evaluations (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, and Skorban, 1998). Therefore, the case study explores seven domains of implementation to measure: (1) population served; (2) service demand; (3) logistics and settings; (4) staffing; (5) activities and approach, including best practices; (6) evaluation; and (7) participant feedbacks. These data contribute to a greater understanding of how these funded partners have implemented their programs and also provides recommendations for program improvements.

In order to measure implementation, we used data from a variety of evaluation methods for each of the indicators within the seven dimensions of implementation. Additional detail on each of these methods is listed in Chapter 2 of this report.

Stage 3: Baseline Measurement of Funded Partner Network

An important set of questions to be answered by the evaluation focuses on **F5MC** as a catalyst for change in community groups and provider systems. The following questions served to guide our efforts in this stage of the evaluation:

- What is the nature of relationships between funded partners and to what extent are these agencies collaborating with each other?
- Are funded partners providing essential program characteristics defined in the ELO Strategic Plan?
- Are programs improving their capacity to serve young children and families, including their organizational capacity for sustainability?
- What are the perceptions of funded partner agencies in working with F5MC staff and the Commission?
- What is the nature of funded partners' capacity to coordinate services for children with special needs?

The Evaluation Framework proposed implementing three primary evaluation activities to assess **F5MC**'s impact at the provider, community and county levels: 1) Network Analysis; 2) documenting the impact of sponsorships and community events; and 3) the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

During FY 2007-2008, as planned, the baseline network analysis was carried out. The other strategies are expected to be rolled out beginning in the second year of the evaluation, in addition to a "time 2" network analysis. This section will describe the methods used to study the baseline funded partner network.

Network Analysis²² provides for a quantifiable basis for understanding community systems and tracks changes in provider systems in communities across time, which will be important when considering the impact of **F5MC** on these systems. Our approach looks at the coordination of services within local provider systems for children and families and assesses the structural characteristics of these networks in order to describe linkages

²² This method combines inter-organizational theory with social network analysis techniques and has a long history of usage (Morrissey, 1992; Fried, Bruce, Johnsen, Starrett, Calloway and Morrissey, 1998; McKinney, Morrissey, and Kaluzny, 1993).

and interactions among organizations (Morrissey, 1992). Changes will be identified by increases in collaboration, service coordination and service integration.

The centerpiece of the network analysis is the Funded Partner/Community Partner Survey, which was administered to the program coordinators and selected line staff of all funded partners as well as a snowball sample of non-funded providers who operate in the same service delivery system. The first round of the survey was administered to program coordinators and selected line staff from **F5MC**-funded partners in the first year of the evaluation, and the results from this survey form the basis for the systems-based findings in this report. The Community Partner Survey is currently being administered to non-funded providers. Results from this survey will be used to complement the results of the Funded Partner Survey and will be presented in fall 2008. Additional detail on each of these methods is provided below. All evaluation protocols are available upon request.

Funded Partner Survey. A web-based survey was distributed to all **F5MC**-funded program coordinators and selected line staff in order to 1) obtain information on the nature of relationships between funded partners and to what extent these agencies are collaborating; 2) assess the extent to which funded partners are providing services that address the ELO Essential Characteristics (e.g., culturally and linguistically appropriate services, flexible and community-based services, family-centered services, coordinated services); 3) obtain information on the capacity of funded partners to serve children and families, including overarching organizational capacity; 4) understand how **F5MC** Commission and staff are perceived by funded partners; and 5) obtain information on the capacity of funded partners to coordinate services for children with special needs. A total of 39 respondents (representing 21 agencies) participated in the survey. Although the funded partner survey collects information on a host of system-level cross-cutting outcome indicators, an analysis of indicators related to increased collaboration and coordination is the focus of the systems-level evaluation and enables a broader view of the impact of **F5MC**-funded services. Thus, the web-based survey seeks information on the following questions:

- level of interaction with funded partner agencies;
- awareness of other agencies;
- referrals to or from other **F5MC**-funded partner agencies;
- exchanges of funds or other material resources;
- the flow of information between agencies; and
- relations involving memoranda of understanding, standard operating procedures, staff liaisons or legal mandates;
- the extent of coordination with other agencies; and
- overall satisfaction with the agency relationship

Community Partner Survey. To form an in-depth picture of the nature of interactions among all key providers in the system of care, it is important to obtain similar types of information from other community agencies. Therefore, although the evaluation will focus on describing a system of relationships among funded partners within the larger provider system, non-funded providers in the service delivery system are also being asked to supplement information provided by funded partners (Goodman et al., 1996). Results from the Community Partner Survey are not yet available. Thus, this component of the evaluation of systems of care will not be described in the present report.

The table on the following page summarizes the indicators that were identified to measure each of the system-level cross-cutting outcome indicators.

Systems-Level Cross-Cutting Outcome Indicators

Dimensions	Indicators
Inter-Agency Collaboration	Decreased barriers to collaboration between F5MC -funded partners and non-funded agencies in the service delivery system; Increased inter-agency interaction
Inter-Agency Relationship	Increased satisfaction with relationships with other agencies in the network of services; Increase clarity about the role and impact of F5MC among other service providers in the system
Essential Characteristics	Improved access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services; Increased access to community based services; Increased access to family-centered/centric services; Increased access to programs with flexible hours
Perceptions of working with F5MC staff and Commission	Increase clarity and types of communication with F5MC staff; Satisfaction with technical assistance; Increased satisfaction of F5MC among funded partners and non-funded partners
Program Development and Sustainability	Increased program capacity due to evaluation and to organizational assessment; Increased satisfaction with F5MC -sponsored capacity building activities, including sustainability and evaluation; Increased ability to attract financial support from other sources
Special Needs Systems	Increased number of appropriate referrals for children who demonstrate developmental delays and special needs, and their families; Decreased duplication of services for children who demonstrate developmental delays and special needs, and their families



F5MC Vision: All children reach their full potential in a family and community that values and respects childhood.

F5MC Mission: To serve as a catalyst to create sustainable change in systems, policies and practices that enrich the development of children in their FIRST 5 years of life.

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