



Imperial County Children and Families First Commission
MINUTES
Meeting of October 2, 2025

I. Call to Order

Commission Chairperson, Karla Sigmond called the October 2, 2025 Regular Meeting of First 5 Imperial to order at 3:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the First 5 Imperial, Training Center, at 1240 State Street, El Centro, CA.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

Barbara Deol

Danila Vargas

Fred Miramontes

Joong Kim

Paula Llanas

Karla Sigmond

Rebecca Green

Commissioners Absent:

John Hawk

Yurii Camacho

Staff:

Julio C. Rodriguez

Fernando Valenzuela

III. Public Comment

Commissioner Sigmond asked that if there was anyone from the public that wished to make a public comment or address anything on the agenda, then that person is given the opportunity to do so. There was no public comment at this time.

IV. Adoption of Minutes for the Special Meeting of June 5, 2025

A motion to approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Commission on June 5, 2025, was made by Commissioner Deol, seconded by Commissioner Green, and having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

V. Consent Calendar Items

The consent calendar items consisted of the First 5 Imperial monthly financial reports for May and June 2025. A motion to approve the consent calendar items was made by Commissioner Miramontes, and seconded by Commissioner Deol, and having noted no further discussion or public comment the motion carried with all in favor.

VI. Administrative Report (Julio C. Rodriguez, Executive Director)

1. Request for Proposal Review for Grant Award for the Infant and Toddler Preschool Program, Neighborhood House of Calexico: Commissioner Sigmond asked Mr. Rodriguez for a summary of the request for the proposal review for the Neighborhood House of Calexico. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the Commission, when reviewing the regular RFP process for the FY 25-28 cycle, one of the applicants that was being considered for funding was the proposal for an Infant and Toddler Preschool Project from the Neighborhood House of Calexico. He noted that due to some issues with the authorization of the preschool license, the Commission had placed the application as pending award. He further noted that representatives from the agency were in attendance and had provided some slides for the Commission to review. He requested for a

representative from the agency to provide the Commission with an update, of which Ms. Isabel Garcia, the Director for the Preschool, provided a brief update, noting that the application for the license had been submitted to the Community Care Licensing for approval and a copy of that application was provided to the Commission. She stated that they were in the process and were currently waiting for licensing to conduct a site visit for the approval process, in addition to the fact that the Neighborhood House of Calexico had already purchased some materials, and she proceeded to go over a short presentation on the modifications that have been made to move forward with the Infant and Toddler Preschool Project, which included play areas, pick-up and drop-off locations, where meals will be provided to children, the area for active care for children, and the outdoor area that will also be used for play. Commissioner Sigmond thanked Ms. Garcia for the presentation, and noted that the Commission was there to support because there is a need for infant/toddler care and that licensing is a hard process. Commissioner Green asked her if they had applied for a contract with CDSS, where Mr. Ricardo Ortega stated that they had not applied yet. Mr. Rodriguez indicated that what the agency was trying to do at this point was obtain the license, where he asked Commissioner Green for clarification if the Contract would mean a contract for the State of California to cover subsidized infant/toddler care, to which she indicated that that was the case, and suggested the Neighborhood House of Calexico quickly move on this so that they would be considered for funding because they may miss the deadline if they do not hurry and submit an application.

Commissioner Sigmond thanked Commissioner Green for guiding them through the process. Ms. Green then asked Mr. Ortega if they are submitting an application unless they intend to be a private center. Mr. Ortega noted that they were not intending to go private. Commission Kim asked if there are extra funds available, and Commissioner Green felt that the agency does not have extra funds right now as they are only applying for their license and that they are barely putting the rooms together, and then they will have licensing come out to review the facility for age appropriateness. She then asked if they were asking for a total of 8 infant slots with the new licensing application, as they already are licensed for preschool-age children. Ms. Garcia indicated that they were in that process for those 8 slots. Mr. Rodriguez asked her to ensure that they were 8 slots, as the application with the Commission is for 11 slots. Mr. Ortega then noted that there are two sources of funding, where the Commission would provide funding for the preschool and they would then apply for funding through the State. Commissioner Green indicated that she thought that the Commission funds were to assist with setting up the infant/toddler site, where Mr. Rodriguez clarified that the request was to set up the site with operating funds for 3 years for 11 slots. Mr. Green indicated that the application was for infant/toddler slots, and Commission Deol suggested that issue this be addressed. Ms. Garcia indicated that the application is for eight, though when licensing does their visit, they would look at the square footage and identify if they can serve more children, that they need to wait because of the size of some of the equipment, such as tables and baby cribs which may change the square footage that they had estimated, which will depend on Community Care Licensing. Commissioner Deol noted that the hospitals have equipment that they use to place infants, and that if that is the type of equipment that they could use. Commissioner Green noted that that may be the case and that they indicated that they already have the equipment, also suggesting that they have space to separate children due to the needs that arise, and care can be more effective. Commissioner Deol asked if the slide indicated where the babies would be placed, to which Ms. Garcia indicated the locations. Commissioner Green also made some suggestions, in reference to the slide, for changes that can be made which may be an issue when licensing does their evaluation, and that the less issued identified by licensing the less changes they will need

to make for approval. Commissioner Kim noted that it was good that she was able to point these things out to help them with the process. Commissioner Deol also asked if there would be a gate or safety barrier placed between the area where the restroom is located and also made some suggestions related to the safe care for children.

Commissioner Sigmond thanked everyone for the comments and asked if anyone would like to make a motion. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the consideration for the motion should be based on the fact that the Neighborhood House intended to have a license prior to this meeting, though has not obtained it as of this point, and suggested that the Commission should consider approving the award with recommendations though would not contract with the agency until a license is secured. Commissioner Green also noted that there should be acknowledgement that CDSS should have funds available for this type of application, because of the worry about setting this all up and then if they do not fund it in the future, what will the Neighborhood House do? Mr. Ortega acknowledged this and further noted that the contract would also include operational funds, that is, to start up with Commission funds, and later on apply for a contract with the State. Mr. Rodriguez noted that this was one of the recommendations that was made that will be included in the agreement for services. Mr. Rodriguez then gave a brief explanation of what the original application was asking for with the recommendations made by the Commission which included funding the application for the funding cycle but then after that they would have to obtain the funding through another source. Commissioner Deol asked if the award would be enough for the Project, where Commissioner Green felt that it may not as care for infants/toddlers is very expensive because they would need staff. Mr. Rodriguez affirmed that in their budget they were asking for three staff, one director and two teachers. Ms. Garcia indicated that the Director will be working directly on site with the children and therefore would be part of the staff to children ratio, which was a concern expressed by Commissioner Green. Mr. Rodriguez noted that one of the concerns by RFP evaluators was the per child cost, though he indicated if the Neighborhood House obtained a contract with the State for infant care that would cover that issue, and recommended that the Commission move forward with a motion understanding that there will be three individuals caring for children that they would have to adjust the total number of children which the highest at that point would be 9 due to the adult-to-child ratios. Commissioner Sigmond then asked if there was a motion. Commissioner Deol then indicated that she would like to make a motion to approve funding to Neighborhood House pending approval from licensing and which would depend on the number of children approved of by licensing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Llanas. With no further discussion or public comment, the motion carried with all in favor.

2. Request for Approval to Issue FY 2024-2025 4th Quarter Payment to the Imperial County Free Library: Commissioner Sigmond noted that the Commission would now move to discuss the pending 4th quarter payment for the Imperial County Free Library. Mr. Rodriguez informed the Commission that this item was up for consideration, which is similar to a request that was made the previous year, where the Commission has been withholding payments for the Raise A Reader Project awarded to the Imperial County Free Library, based on the requirement that the agencies must submit an annual audit report before the final payments are issued. The problem is that the County Library is not up to date on this requirement as the Commission has not received audit reports for a number of years, which include FY22-23, FY 23-24, and the current year, FY 24-25. Regardless, the request is for the Commission to approve release of the 4th quarter payment so as not to penalize the County Library, and so that they can meet their obligations. The Commission does withhold 5% of the final amount due, and these amounts will

be held until it receives the annual audit report to the years in question. He further noted that the problem is not with the County Library, but with the fact that the County of Imperial is behind on completing their audit reports, and generally the County would have provided a separate audit of the program like previous years, though they no longer provide that service. He also noted that for FY 22-23 there is no 5% final payment due, namely because of the fact that the Project did not spend enough of the funding allocation for the Commission to owe any additional payments, where in fact the, the library spent less than the allocation for the first two quarterly payments, that the Commission had to request a reimbursement at the end of the year, though a final payment is due for FY 23-24 and for FY 24-25. Therefore, we are asking for the Commission to release the 4th quarter payment for FY 24-25.

Commissioner Sigmond asked if anyone would like to make a motion. Commissioner Miramontes then made the motion to approve the release of the 4th quarter payment for the Imperial County Free Library. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Deol. With no further discussion the motion carried with all in favor.

3. Request for Approval to Engage with Jensen Smith CPAs, Inc. for Completion of Annual Audit of Financial Statements for FY 2024-2025: Commissioner Sigmond moved to introduce the request to engage with Jensen Smith CPAs for the purposes of completing the annual audit report for First 5 Imperial for FY 2024-2025. Mr. Rodriguez reminded Commissioners that Mr. Tubach, the CPA that had originally been contract to complete the annual audit report for First 5 Imperial had retired due to health reasons, and that the Commission had been searching for an auditing firm that had the capacity to do government audits and that was also available to complete the annual audit report for the year ending June 30, 2025. He noted that the agency that has been identified is Jensen Smith, CPAs, they are located in Lincoln, California and that the costs for the audit were reasonable compared to those from the previous years, and that this agency has significant experience, particularly since it does currently work with a number of First 5 Commissions. Commissioner Deol noted that she felt the costs were reasonable, given how expensive everything has become. Mr. Rodriguez agreed, particularly with the long search for new auditors and the fact that they were available to complete the report this year, and he noted that for example, the Commission had contacted a previous auditing firm, Fechter & Co. CPAs, though their audit costs had almost doubled and they would not be able to being the process until February 2026. He reiterated the Jensen Smith CPAs have extensive experience in working with First 5 County Commissions, and that they particularly have worked with a number of small counties which would be compatible with the needs of First 5 Imperial.

Mr. Rodriguez noted that for the first year they would be charging \$15,600.00, and the second year the costs go down to about \$14,200.00. Commissioner Miramontes asked why the first year would be more expensive, and Mr. Rodriguez clarified that for the first year the CPA will need to review a significant number of new documents, particularly those related to compliance, such as minutes from previous years, the strategic plan, specific policies, etc. He indicated that they would also sign an engagement letter, once approved of by the Commission, and then the process can begin. He then asked for the Commission to approve engaging in CPA services with Jensen Smith, CPAs for the purpose of completing the annual audit report for the year ending June 30, 2025. Commissioner Miramontes asked if the audit would meet the deadline. Mr. Rodriguez indicated that it would certainly not be the case, and that the CPA firm is currently working on completing other annual audits for First 5 Commissions, and therefore

the Commission will be asking the State Controller's Office and First 5 California for an extension of the request, similar to the extension requested last year.

Commissioner Deol then asked what had happened to Mr. Tubach, and Julio explained that he had to retire for health reasons. The Commissioner Sigmond asked if there was a motion to approve engaging for auditing services with Jensen Smith CPAs. Commissioner Deol made a motion to approve engaging in service with the new auditing firm. The second to this motion was made by Commissioner Llanas. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all in favor.

4. Request to Approve Partnership Agreement with First 5 Region 9 for IMPACT Legacy Program:
Next Mr. Rodriguez noted that the Commission is currently working with the First 5 Region 9 to realize services related to First 5 IMPACT. Commissioner Sigmond asked if he could provide a brief update on the partnership with Region 9. Mr. Rodriguez then stated that First 5 California had created a number of Regions relevant to working with County Commissions, and that these were primarily so that the State Commission could focus on the procurement to 10 to 12 contracts versus 58. Therefore First 5 Imperial is part of Region 9, which includes First 5 Riverside, First 5 San Bernardino, and First 5 Orange. The fiscal lead for Region 9 is First 5 Riverside, and First 5 California contracts with First 5 Riverside for the region, and then First 5 Riverside has to subcontract with the other three counties as part of the partnership. Through IMPACT Legacy, First 5 Imperial provides specific services in Imperial County which target 58 family childcare providers, and include other services with Migrant Head Start, Private Centers or alternative childcare sites. He further noted that there are two years remaining that were originally allocated for First 5 Legacy, and that this agreement is for the third year. The State is being cautious on allocating contracts, namely due to decreases in tobacco revenue. This year the State Commission asked Regions to present budgets that would reflect a 10% reduction in program funding, and there is no process at this time for the use of carryover funds, as had been the case in previous years. He noted that even though the Commission had already approved entering into the Region 9 agreement for the previous years, it would be important for the Commission to approve of the partnership agreement again due to the fact the amount will be changing and the Commission will be signing new contract with First 5 Riverside, the Region 9 lead, which would reflect the changes in the total award, that is 10% less, where these changes are reflected in the IMPACT Legacy Budget and project narrative included in the packet. He stated that the emphasis for services under this program, through this new cycle, will shift from formal ratings to actionable quality improvements that support family childcare homes, alternative settings and other childcare sites with coaching, professional advancement stipends, materials and other resources. In addition, he highlighted the fact that the budget and narrative include the subcontracts for our Early Learning Coach, Ms. Maria Angeles, and BD Studios, the contractor that works on media and messaging for the Project. The First 5 Imperial IMPACT Legacy budget for FY 2025-2026 is \$259,209.45, reflecting a decrease of 10% from previous two-year funding cycle. First 5 Riverside, the lead agency for Region 9, has sent out the Agreement for signatures. A copy of the agreement is included as a separate attachment. The proposed budget and narrative also include the subcontract for the ECE coach and media content creator which are the same as previous years.

Therefore because of the changes in the total allocation Mr. Rodriguez indicated that it is important to provide this information to the Commission and ask for an approval to move forward with engaging in the Regional contract with First 5 Riverside for the IMPACT Legacy program for the coming two years and to move forward with the Regional partnership. Commissioner Deol noted that it may be the case that there will be adjustments to our end of the IMPACT Program, and Mr. Rodriguez acknowledged that there will be fiscal changes, though the general scope of work will essentially be the same, and a significant portion of the changes to the budget came from the administrative/indirect costs associated with the program, as staff felt that it would be important for the services to continue.

Commissioner Sigmond asked for a motion on the agenda item. A motion to approve continuing with the Regional partnership and contracting with First 5 Riverside for the IMPACT Legacy Project was made by Commissioner Deol and seconded by Commissioner Green; with no further discussion the motion carried with all in favor.

5. Request to Approve Membership Fees for the First 5 Association: Commissioner Sigmond introduced the matter regarding the increase in the First 5 Association's fees for First 5 Imperial. Mr. Rodriguez noted that during a previous meeting he had provided information on the proposed fee increase, where the Association was including a fees structure for the FY 2025-2026 that is essentially set up with a \$6,000 base for all counties, plus live births for each county being multiplied by \$2.60, with a maximum total for any county being capped at \$95,000. Therefore, if the voluntary fund is included as part of the annual fees due by First 5 Imperial, the increase from FY 2024-2025 to FY 2025-2026 would be an increase representing 256% of what was previously paid, from \$4,925 to \$12,637.80. Commissioner Sigmond noted that it is a huge increase, and other Commissioners agreed. He also noted that one of the difficult issues with the formula was that the increases waived significantly from County to County, where some increases were around 20%, and where even one County showed a decrease in their total dues, though in fairness this circumstance was based on the fact that that County had contributed significantly through the voluntary fund contribution, and were therefore paying more.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that if the general formula were implemented across the board larger Counties would be contributing significantly more, through part of the argument for capping the maximum dues at \$95,000 was based on the value added for the larger Counties, and therefore it would be difficult for some Counties to justify a significant increase, in one case up to \$400,000, based on the services that they are getting from the Association and the fact that tobacco revenue is going down, which also contributes to significant cuts at the local level. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the midsized Counties are where the most dramatic increases were noted, and he stated that because of this one County did pull out of the Association, which is Tulare County, noting that they would no longer be a part of the Association based on the increase and the direction that the County Commission will be taking as it moves forward. He noted that the Association understood the decision to pull out and left options open for Tulare to rejoin the Association at any other point in time. He further indicated that the reason for bringing this item to the Commission for approval is that the total fees due for FY 2025-2026 was higher than the \$10,000 threshold that he is permitted to authorize without approval from the Commission, and therefore the Commission would need to approve the payment to the Association regarding the new fees structure.

He also noted that regardless of the total, it is important for the Commission to understand this increase and that the expectation is that there will be some value added based on the fees increase for all County Commissions. Commissioner Miramontes asked if the Commission needs to be a part of the Association, as he felt that the increase was way too much, also given that costs of other services and tobacco revenues being down. Mr. Rodriguez note that the Commission did not have to be a member, as membership is voluntary, as with the case of First 5 Tulare. Commissioner Miramontes asked what types of services are being provided by the Association. Mr. Rodriguez noted that there are a number of services, such as legislative advocacy, Commissioner onboarding, professional development opportunities, and the Association provided meaningful technical support with the Medical Managed Plan MOUs that were being proposed with First 5 Commissions. He noted that the Association is also an important link between First 5 California and County Commissions. Mr. Rodriguez also stated that it is important to understand that the Children and Families Act of 1998 is funded through an initiative, and not part of the legislative agenda, therefore issues related to sustainability and making inroads with the legislature and policy makers is difficult and something that the Association intends to take on, though perhaps, due to the State's budget scenarios, currently that may a difficult task for the Association. He indicated that one win would be First 5s being recognized as important vehicles for serving young children and therefore have access to more grant opportunities at the State level. Commissioner Sigmond noted that right now it would be very difficult to have any fiscal leverage with the legislature due to the budget situation and other uncertainties that may afflict the state. Commissioner Miramontes agreed that it would be difficult for the Association to have any impact on the State's fiscal policies. Mr. Rodriguez agreed, and provided an example of the Association's support for the creation of a 0-3 workgroup through the State's legislative process, and how that, being a great idea or cause, had little traction in the legislature and did not move forward. He also noted part of what the Association is also intending with the increase in fees is to have more freedom for staff to focus on First 5 issues and to not rely as much on outside grants as the reporting and process is time consuming.

Commissioner Green noted that it would be important for the Association to establish a partnership with Every Child, and this was discussed briefly the Commissioners. A motion to approve of the fees increase for FY 2025-2026 as proposed by the First 5 Association was made by Commission Deol and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. With no further discussion, the motion passed with all in favor.

6. Medical Managed Care Plan MOU with First 5 Imperial: Mr. Rodriguez provided an update on the Medical Managed Care Plan MOU that First 5 Imperial has with the two Medical Managed Care Plans operating in Imperial County; Kaiser Permanente and the Community Health Plan of Imperial County. He noted that staff from First 5 Imperial has participated in multiple meetings with representatives from the two Managed Care Plans (MCPs), and through these discussions resulted in a joint partnership for the Commission and representatives from both MCPs to participate in services outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). He indicated that a copy of the MOU was provided for reference, and that the final MOU, signed on July 28, 2025, identifies the scope of services to be implemented between First 5 Imperial and the two Managed Care Plans, and also designates representatives and liaisons responsible for carrying out the MOU's provisions; for First 5 Imperial, the Executive Director is named as the Commission's Responsible Person, and the Special Programs Manager is identified as the Liaison. He noted that for the Community Health Plan of Imperial County subcontractors from

Health Net are representing the organization, and that there are representatives from Kaiser Permanente, though the overall scope of their services in Imperial County are limited, primarily to the areas of Salton City and Thermal.

He stated that the MOU serves as a binding and enforceable agreement between the MCPs and First 5 Imperial, that the intent is to establish collaborative partnerships that enhance access to services for beneficiaries, focusing on the end result that members receive the full range of benefits available to them. Specifically, this partnership focuses on services that support children prenatal to age five and their families. He noted that through the partnership established by the MOU, the first quarterly meeting was held on September 18, 2025. During that meeting an overview of the engagement process was provide, where key considerations included: identifying providers/grantees that may be able to provide services consistent with the MOU; the alignment of services between Managed Care Plans and First 5 Imperial; a review of the terms of the MOU and an understanding of the minimum obligations. He noted that they worked to establish how quarterly meetings would be realized and the review of a standing agenda with predetermined items, in addition to requirements that local Managed Care Plans or that First 5 Imperial would want to included. He noted that from the first quarterly meeting it was clear the Managed Care Plans were working to determine how the scope of the MOU would be realized and what needs to be done. He also stated that they shared some concerns related to serving members in the County, in addition to what First 5 Imperial could expect with respect to the trainings for providers/grantee with respect to Managed Care Plans and the MOU process, as that is one of the requirements of the MOU, is that Managed Care Plans provide trainings to staff and grantees providing services to medical beneficiaries. He noted that the Managed Care Plans provided a deck of slides that would be used for training, with about 120 slides, yet much of that information was general training about Managed Care Plans with jargon that is not defined. He suggested that this would not be relevant to many of the providers that we are working with, particularly, for example, family childcare providers. He stated that it would be important for the training to be meaningful for the target population.

He indicated that they also had a discussion on the coordination of services, such as the referral processes that would be worked out, that is, how First 5 Imperial or grantees would work to refer families for services, and how the providers working with Managed Care Plans would refer families to First 5 grantees for additional services. One other issue that he noted was the concern that many families that were here legally may not want to participate in any government services, and what Managed Care Plans were doing to address this matter. He also identified the fact that for services relevant to families that would be working with the Commission, agencies would be offering the services of Community Healthcare Workers and/or Enhanced Care Managers. These components are billable through the Managed Care Plans, though they are separate from the MOU, and can provide services through the MOU once established, and that at this point the Commission would like to know who the local Community Healthcare Workers and/or Enhanced Care Managers were directly working with the local plans. He provided a brief explanation of how these individuals provide services to families, and highlighting that it would be important for the Commission to know who they were as we work to coordinate services with the Managed Care Plans. Finally, he also talked about the matter related to data sharing, that is how, through the MOU, First 5 Imperial and the Managed Care Plans would share data. He noted that the Commission would not provide any personal information, and that what information providers offer will depend on families wanting to participate and how the referral process works.

Commissioner Kim asked what the role of the Commission is right now in the MOU process with the local plans. Mr. Rodriguez noted that there are currently two staff involved, the Authorized Representative and the First 5 Liaison, and that the Commission's role is to help coordinate services with the plans, and that is why it will be important to working out the referral process and how families will benefit from the process. Commissioner Kim noted that staff would be acting like service coordinators or brokers. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the referral process would ideally go both ways. Commissioner Kim asked about other agencies that are serving children, and Mr. Rodriguez noted that there are other agencies in the County that may also have MOUs with the Healthcare Plans, and therefore it will be good to no duplicate services. Commissioner Kim noted that the Commission may need some person that is dedicated to this so that they could only focus on these services. He noted that there are people in the Community that do not understand how services work, such as who they would go to for healthcare services. Mr. Rodriguez noted that that would be ideal to have a dedicated person to the process, though at this point the Commission will want to see how this partnership will work. Commissioner Kim further noted that it was not clear how Kaiser Permanente's Plan would be able to serve families in the County without them having to travel to San Diego or Riverside for these services. He also noted that it will be important for grantees to understand how they will be serving families through this process and to ensure that the availability or access to services are relevant to our families, so that they are not confused. Commissioner Sigmond noted that that would be the purpose of the training, and asked if the trainings will be bilingual. Mr. Rodriguez agreed and stated that that is why the training needs to be relevant so grantees and providers are not confused and would check with Ms. Andrade to see if training are going to be offered in Spanish. He further stated that if staffing becomes an issue, it would be brought to the Commission for approval to move forward. Commissioner Kim also commented on the fact that some low-income families may not qualify for Medical, and wanted to see how the Managed Care Plans would assist these individuals. Commissioner Sigmond asked Mr. Rodriguez to check with the plans on that issue, and then asked if there were any other comments before the Commission moves to the next item.

7. 4th Quarter FY 2024-2025 Funded Project Summary: Then Mr. Rodriguez moved to provide a presentation on the quarterly reports for the FY 2024-2025 4th quarter. He noted that staff are working to wrap up the reports for Fiscal Year 2024–2025, for the grants awarded by the Commission to multiple local agencies to support programs that enhance the health, education, and development of children prenatal to age five and their families, and that as of August 28, 2025, the majority of projects—6 major grants and 4 mini-grants—have submitted their required documentation. He noted that the deadline for submitting reports was July 15, 2025, with extensions granted upon request. He noted that a summary report was include in the packet that provides an overview of the services offered and expense summary for both general and mini-grant program. He stated that allocations included 6 major grants totaling \$1,224,719 and 6 Community Development Mini-Grants totaling \$114,543, where the grants are providing a broad array of services aligned with the Commission's strategic priorities, and as a requirement, all grantees are must submit quarterly progress reports, which include both narrative descriptions and data collected through evaluation tools.

He noted that event through the Commission may be funding less programs, that the current programs are still offering services to an important number of children, having served over

2,456 children and parents through direct services. He further highlighted that 48 % of services fell under the child health category, 42% were related to family strengthening, and only 9% fell under the early care and education category. He did clarify that the services may vary, as some are more intensive, such as those provided by the HIPPY Program that consist of 30 weeks of participation, which used to fall under early care and education, though, because it is a home visiting program, now falls under family strengthening, and also noting that some child health services, such as the fire and burn prevention programs may have been less intensive in the actual service offered, which consist of a 2-hour presentation, though can be very beneficial if the child understands issues related to fire and burn prevention at an age appropriate level.

He then noted that under professional development 100% of the services targeted early care and education providers working with young children, and though it is professional development, there is a potential to impact services offered to a significant number of children, which is an estimate that the Commission would like to obtain from grantees. He indicated that there were 409 childcare providers that were served through the Imperial County Office of Education through either direct training opportunities offered by their Child Development Department or the Early Care and Education Conference. He stated that when looking at the data between direct services and/or professional development the level of services may seem off balance, though these outcomes are contingent to the projects funded by the Commission, whether general or mini grant funded projects. He further highlighted the fact that the majority of direct services were offered as a “class/workshop” modality, which included 1,529 families and children, in addition “home visits” were intensive services either offered through the HIPPY Project or the Next Steps Project through the El Centro Elementary School District. He also noted services offered though “case management”, which may be more intense and included 646 children and families. Commissioner Deol commented that the level of intensity is different for these types of services due to the number of hours dedicated to the individual service modality. She asked about the duplication of services, where Mr. Rodriguez noted that the Commission works to eliminate duplication as much as possible, though it would be difficult to tell if multiple programs served the same families, and specific individual data is not collected. Mr. Rodriguez then conveyed that the majority of services continue to be offered within the catchment areas of three cities, El Centro, Brawley and Calexico.

He stated that some projects requested extensions for specific sections of their reports, so the grantee review process is not complete, and that several projects included supplemental information and supporting documentation to validate their services to children and their families. From the expense information collected, he noted that approximately 87% of the total funds award have been expensed, and that generally year-to-year data indicate that total expenses may be from 86% to 92%, depending on the given year, therefore the total is consistent with this data. He then highlighted that one project, the Imperial County Free Library’s Raise A Reader Project only expenses 56% of their funds, where he noted that this primarily was due to staff turnover, which also affected their ability to serve families. He said that the majority of funded projects did spend most of their allocation, stating that the County Office of Education and CASA had virtually expensed 100% of their allocation. For mini-grants he noted that only 60% of funding was spent, namely due to three projects that have significantly low expenditures; one of these projects, the SURE Helpline Center had requested for the contract to be terminated, another, the UC Desert Research Center decided not to contract with the Commission due to staff turnover, and the third project that had low expenses was the Imperial Valley Life Center. He also stated that these reports are used by the Commission to

draft the Annual Report submitted to First 5 California via its web-based reporting system, and subsequently will be approved of by the Commission.

Commissioner Sigmond thanked Mr. Rodriguez for the presentation and asked if any Commissioners had questions regarding the 4th quarter summary. No additional comments were noted.

8. Professional Advancement for Childcare Educators (PACES) Stipend Program: Mr. Rodriguez then proceeded to provide a brief update of the Professional Advancement for Childcare Educators (PACES) Stipend Program to Commissioners. He noted that First 5 Imperial has two components that are offered through the PACES Program. Of which he stated that these components are comprised of a higher education stipend and a professional development stipend, and for FY 2024-2025 the Commission had completed another round of PACES Program application review, and that these programs were created as a result of the Commission's commitment to the identified need to establish support for educational attainment and capacity building for early care and education providers. He noted that the PACES Program offers an application for a stipend for educational attainment for an amount of \$1,000 for providers meeting eligibility requirement, and that under this component early care and education providers must complete a minimum of 9 semester units at an accredited institution of higher education and work in an early care and education setting that serves children 0-5 years of age. He also indicated that for the PACES Plus-Plus Program, the Commission offers a stipend for professional development for the purpose of building capacity for individuals in these settings, and that the total award is up to \$300 for early care and education providers completing up to 10 trainings or other learning opportunities approved of by the Commission, at \$30 per training completed.

Mr. Rodriguez noted that the Commission awarded 64 stipends for FY 2024-2025. A total of 10 stipends were awarded for the educational attainment component of the PACES Program totaling \$10,000, and 54 stipend awards were issued for professional development through the PACES Plus-Plus Program totaling \$11,040, which ranged from \$60 to \$300 per individual awarded. He stated that Commission staff are working on a summary of PACES Program application awards, and will be assessing guidelines for any recommended changes and noted that copies of the PACES Program and PACES Plus-Plus Program applications were provided for reference, and provided a general breakdown of the stipend recipients. Commissioner Green noted that there is a legislative change that may impact the stipend program, which is that assistants are now allowed continue in that position, that prior to that, after 5 years, they would be required to move up. She noted that this was an important change, because many individuals may not want to move up, where this allows them to remain in their position, and that really no center can exist without assistants. Mr. Rodriguez agreed that that is an important change, and Ms. Green noted that the Neighborhood House will probably need to hire assistants to serve children. He then ended with noting that staff are working on a brief related to the PACES Program and will share that with Commissioners.

9. Other First 5 Imperial Updates: Mr. Rodriguez then provided some brief updates that are important for the Commission. He first noted that staff are working on the annual report that will be submitted to First 5 California, and the it will be important to identify expenses, revenue and the fund balance for that report. He noted that it is due on October 31, 2025, though due to the audit being delayed, staff will be asking for an extension to submit annual report

information. He stated that staff are currently putting together data from grantee quarterly reports and preparing that information to be submitted consistent with the format required by First 5 California, and that once the report is completed, it will be provided to the Commission for approval.

Next, he provided an update on AB 339, the Ortega bill that is currently before the legislature. He noted that this bill will be important for the Commission in that it may affect how the Commission will offer funding opportunities, namely, would require the governing body of a public agency, such as the Commission, to give a recognized employee organization no less than 60-day notice before issuing a request for proposal, and in addition to that the request for proposal should have specific information on contracting. He noted that the bill was up for consideration, and that it had previously been opposed by some funding agencies due to the limits placed on the timing for the bill, and the First 5 Association did take up the position not to support the bill. The next update that he provided to the Commission was on the California Jobs First Request for Proposal that was submitted by the Commission for consideration of funding. He noted that the funding opportunity was part of round 2 of the California Jobs First Project through the Southern Border Coalition, and the purpose of the grant is to advance programs that move to address the regional strategies developed by the Southern Border Region and needs to support strategies outlined in their regional plan. He indicated that the priorities include equity, sustainability, job quality and access, and economic competitiveness. First 5 Imperial is currently working on submitting an RFP proposal for consideration, and noted that the grant would be a good fit for the Commission as it has a workforce study that supports the narrative submitted in the application and there is already some experience working with target population. He also stated that the Commission was accepted as part of the Southern Border Coalition, where that application was due on September 18th, and this was one of the requirements for submitting an application, and the final would be due on October 8th. Commissioner Sigmond noted that there were different tiers in the application, and asked which tier the application was targeting and how much was being asked for by the Commission. Mr. Rodriguez stated that they would be applying under the second tier, identified as emerging, namely due to the fact that the Commission already has experience in working with that segment of the workforce and would be planning services for providers, and would therefore not be exploratory which is the first tier. He further noted that the application is for approximately \$200,000. He also stated that for the second round it is clear that there will be a significant increase in the number of proposals submitted to California Jobs First, and hence, more competitive than the first round. He noted if approved, staff would bring the matter to the Commission for approval at the next meeting. Commissioner Sigmond noted that the application required a lot of work and thanked staff for submitting it on behalf of the Commission, and Commissioner Kim asked if the application required agencies to be non-profits. Mr. Rodriguez noted that they did have to be non-profit organizations or public institutions, where the Commission falls into the second area as its designation being a government entity.

Mr. Rodriguez then noted that staff would be working assess the current strategic plan for updates on information relevant to the Commission's priorities, also will be looking at the long-term fiscal plan, and will be doing a review of the Commission Bylaws. Commissioner Sigmond asked if there were any other updates, and thanked staff for their work.

VII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Sigmond asked if there were any Commissioner comments, with none noted, she thanks everyone for participating in the meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

Having no further business to discuss, Commissioner Deol motioned to adjourn, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Miramontes. The meeting was adjourned at 5:18 pm. With all in favor.