First 5 Mariposa County
Strategic Plan
2021-2024

June 10, 2021
This strategic plan was prepared for the First 5 Mariposa Children and Families Commission
Executive Director, Nikki West, and Commissioners:

**Gwen Nitta**, Chair

**Rosemarie Smallcombe**, Vice Chair & Board of Supervisors Representative

**Margarita King**, Public Health Representative

**Lydia Lower**, School District Representative

**Patrick McCarthy**, Special Education Representative

**Jennifer McCollom**, Special Projects Representative

**Katherine Baker**, Health & Human Services Agency Representative

**Kimberley Martin**, Community Representative

**Kim Tucker**, Community Representative

by the consulting team of Nicole Lezin, MPPM, Cole Communications, Inc., and Penelope Huang, PhD, Clarity Social Research Group.

P.O. Box 966
Mariposa, CA  95338
https://www.mariposacounty.org/180/First-5
# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.............................................................................................................................. i
Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 1
Strategic Planning Framework and Process............................................................................................. 2
2021-2024 Goals and Objectives, by Result Area .................................................................................. 3
Needs Assessment & Interview Findings................................................................................................. 7
  Gaps and Needs ..................................................................................................................................... 7
  First 5 Strengths and Assets ................................................................................................................. 10
  School Readiness Focus ....................................................................................................................... 10
  Partnership Opportunities ...................................................................................................................... 11
  First 5 Mariposa Contributions ........................................................................................................... 11
Results ..................................................................................................................................................... 13
Executive Summary

This strategic plan describes how Mariposa County’s First 5 Commission (the First 5 Children and Families Commission) plans to support the County’s youngest residents, aged 0 to 5, and their families. First 5 Mariposa County’s plans for the future build on nearly two decades of investments in school readiness to advance First 5 Mariposa’s vision:

*All children in Mariposa County will thrive in supportive, loving, and nurturing environments, enter school healthy and ready to learn and become productive, well-adjusted members of society*

and mission:

*To provide for the optimal physical, emotional, and intellectual growth of the young children of Mariposa County, the Commission will facilitate, through funding priorities and disbursement of Proposition 10 funds, the creation, implementation, or enhancement of integrated and collaborative preventive services and programs.*

The 2021-24 strategic plan is based on interviews with Commissioners, partners, and community members during 2021-21, as well as reviews of evaluation reports, local data relevant to children and families, other local needs assessments and planning efforts, and reviews of activities in other small counties.

The context for First 5 Mariposa County’s initiatives is a declining population of young children and the ongoing challenges that working parents in Mariposa County face in finding safe, quality care for their children that is also affordable. In 2019, approximately 35.5 percent of Mariposa County’s children aged 0-5 (about 249 children) were living in families whose incomes place them below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) of $26,500 for a family of four. Although data trends should be interpreted with caution due to small population sizes, Mariposa County’s child abuse and neglect reports appear to be rising and exceed the state average (78.4 reports per 1,000 children in Mariposa County in 2018, compared to 52.9/1,000 in California).
Mariposa County also offers many strengths and assets for First 5 Mariposa County and its partners to draw from. These include a track record of investing in improving school readiness (by supporting two preschool programs with funding for staff and professional development, as well as a transitional kindergarten program), increasing access to health care (particularly oral health care in partnership with HHSA’s public health oral health team), and contributing to early literacy and other initiatives. Looking ahead, First 5 Mariposa County plans to continue its work to address current needs and gaps, while building on existing strengths and partnerships. Goals and objectives for 2021-24 are described in greater detail in the full strategic plan, along with indicators to track progress, and are grouped in the table below into four result areas: Health, Families, Education, and Services.

While the organization’s budget and staffing are lean, First 5 Mariposa’s impact is already significant for many families in Mariposa County. As the interviewees reiterated in many different ways, the organization’s potential is even greater, with opportunities for partnerships that blend funding, expertise, and coordination and make the most of the collaborative spirit and tight-knit community of which Mariposa County residents are justifiably proud.

### 2021-2024 Goals and Objectives, by Result Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result Area</th>
<th>2021-2022 Objectives</th>
<th>2022-2023 Objectives</th>
<th>2023-2024 Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Goal</strong></td>
<td>§ Continue funding and support of existing Catheys Valley and Lake Don Pedro</td>
<td>§ Use evaluation results to focus teacher/staff training and resources in these</td>
<td>§ Work with MCUSD/adult education and workforce development to increase options for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children will be</strong></td>
<td>high-quality preschool programs.</td>
<td>programs to increase school readiness for participating children.</td>
<td>quality early childhood education for more families (e.g., expanded family childcare options)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ready for school.</strong></td>
<td>§ Use First 5 Mariposa’s website, social media, parenting programs, and partnerships</td>
<td>§ Continue promoting school readiness indicators to families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to promote school readiness indicators to parents and caregivers</td>
<td>§ Continue warm hand-offs from preschool and other early childhood education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>§ Continue promoting literacy through Dolly Parton Imagination Library book</td>
<td>programs to T-K and K-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Health Goal
**Children will be mentally and physically healthy.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result Area</th>
<th>2021-2022 Objectives</th>
<th>2022-2023 Objectives</th>
<th>2023-2024 Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Health Goal** | - Identify children’s system of care points where First 5 Mariposa can connect families to behavioral and physical health options (e.g., oral health, immunizations, behavioral health)  
- Join partners in stigma reduction campaign to encourage access to support, services (e.g., food, counseling) | - Continue promoting healthy habits curriculum preschools (e.g., healthy snacks/eating, physical activity)  
- Provide healthy habits training for new preschool teachers/staff  
- Promote/ sponsor local healthy play groups (with partners) and safety (e.g., swim safety, fire safety, safe sleep campaigns) | - Join partners to expand access to physical and behavioral health screening, referrals (e.g., mobile health vans) |
| **Families Goal** | - Support and promote existing parenting support programs (play groups, parent/caregiver groups, etc.)  
- Support adult and child screening in different settings for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to promote healing and resilience | - Increase awareness of trauma-informed services and systems among First 5 partners via jointly sponsored training, web/social media cross-promotions with partners  
- Select and if feasible implement home visiting model to address needs of low-income, vulnerable families and children | - Expand access to parenting support for more Mariposa County families |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result Area</th>
<th>2021-2022 Objectives</th>
<th>2022-2023 Objectives</th>
<th>2023-2024 Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services Goal</strong>&lt;br&gt;Services will be culturally appropriate, integrated, and collaborative.</td>
<td>- Increase collaborations with existing partners to provide culturally appropriate, integrated services (e.g., HHSA and others for children’s system of care and screenings; MCUSD for school readiness and warm handoffs)&lt;br&gt;- Strengthen collaborations and outreach with organizations serving cultural/linguistic populations (e.g., Native American families, monolingual Spanish-speaking families)</td>
<td>- Join partners to evaluate children’s system of care gaps and identify First 5’s role in addressing gaps&lt;br&gt;- Join partners in assessing specific ways to make services more culturally appropriate for Mariposa County families</td>
<td>- Continue to address system of care gaps&lt;br&gt;- Implement recommended strategies for increasing culturally appropriate services (e.g., staff hiring/recruiting; staff training; materials translated into Spanish)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First 5 Mariposa County Strategic Plan 2021-24
Executive Summary
Introduction

Mariposa County, nestled in the scenic foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, is one of California’s original counties. The population is small—just over 17,000, according to 2019 estimates from the American Community Survey—and the population of children has been declining for a decade. Among Mariposa County’s children, First 5 Mariposa is focused on those aged 0-5, which the U.S. Census Bureau estimated to number about 873 children in 2020. Reflecting the County’s demographics, just over 72 percent of Mariposa County’s children are white, 18.4 percent are Hispanic/Latino, 2.4 percent are American Indian/Alaska Native, 1.1 percent are Asian American, 0.7 percent are Black, and 4.7 percent are multiracial.

This strategic plan describes how Mariposa County’s First 5 Commission plans to support the County’s youngest residents and their families, building on nearly two decades of investments in school readiness to advance First 5 Mariposa’s vision and mission:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All children in Mariposa County will thrive in supportive, loving, and nurturing environments, enter school healthy and ready to learn and become productive, well-adjusted members of society.</td>
<td>To provide for the optimal physical, emotional, and intellectual growth of the young children of Mariposa County, the Commission will facilitate, through funding priorities and disbursement of Proposition 10 funds, the creation, implementation, or enhancement of integrated and collaborative preventive services and programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategic Planning Framework and Process

Mariposa’s First 5 Commission contracted with an external consulting team, Nicole Lezin of Cole Communications, Inc. and Penelope Huang of Clarity Social Research Group, to update the prior 2018-21 strategic plan. The consultants reviewed existing needs assessments and local data to assess demographic trends, health and social services data, and access to early childhood services and programs in Mariposa County. They also interviewed 22 respondents representing different sectors involved in supporting children and families (including parents), presented interim findings to the Commission members and interested local groups, and deployed a survey of early childhood educators to better understand their evolving needs. The COVID-19 pandemic that unfolded in early 2020 and persisted into 2021 prevented in-person gatherings for discussion and input, so presentations and feedback sessions occurred virtually instead.

The consultants asked interviewees to reflect on the following topics:

- Perceptions of gaps and needs
- First 5’s strengths and assets
- The pros and cons of focusing on school readiness
- Opportunities for partnership
- Potential First 5 contributions in the future

- Results that could be achieved within the next 3-5 years.

Based on the reviews of prior needs assessments and interviews, the team then organized proposed goals and objectives into four First 5 result areas: Health, Families, Education, and Services. The goals and objectives for 2021-24 are presented first, followed by more details from the needs assessment and interviews that support these recommendations.

Plan Contributors (Interviews, Feedback, & Data Providers)

- First 5 Mariposa Commissioners and Executive Director
- Local Child Care Planning Council (LCPC)
- County Departments/Agencies
  - Economic Development
  - Workforce Development
  - Mariposa County Unified School District (MCUSD)
    - Administrative Officer
- Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA)
- Child Care Providers
- Local Parents
- Rotary Club Members
## 2021-2024 Goals and Objectives, by Result Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result Area</th>
<th>2021-2022 Objectives</th>
<th>2022-2023 Objectives</th>
<th>2023-2024 Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Goal</strong>&lt;br&gt;<em>Children will be ready for school.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Continue funding and support of existing Catheys Valley and Lake Don Pedro high-quality preschool programs.</td>
<td>▪ Use evaluation results to focus teacher/staff training and resources in these programs to increase school readiness for participating children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Use First 5 Mariposa’s website, social media, parenting programs, and partnerships to promote school readiness indicators to parents and caregivers</td>
<td>▪ Continue promoting school readiness indicators to families</td>
<td>▪ Work with MCUSD/ adult education and workforce development to increase options for quality early childhood education for more families (e.g., expanded family childcare options)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Continue promoting literacy through Dolly Parton Imagination Library book distribution</td>
<td>▪ Continue warm hand-offs from preschool and other early childhood education programs to T-K and K-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators</strong>&lt;br&gt;(How can progress be tracked?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Web/ social media presence for First 5 school readiness information</td>
<td>▪ Targeted training opportunities for preschool staff</td>
<td>▪ Targeted training opportunities for preschool staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP); Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS); Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) assessment results</td>
<td>▪ Parent access to First 5 Web/ social media school readiness information</td>
<td>▪ Parent access to First 5 Web/ social media school readiness information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Mariposa County Unified School District (MCUSD) 9 school readiness indicators (Parent Information Student Activity Packet for Kindergarten)</td>
<td>▪ Improved DRDP, CLASS, ECERS-R and MCUSD school readiness indicators</td>
<td>▪ Improved DRDP, CLASS, ECERS-R, and MCUSD school readiness indicators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result Area</td>
<td>2021-2022 Objectives</td>
<td>2022-2023 Objectives</td>
<td>2023-2024 Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Goal</td>
<td>Identify children’s system of care points where First 5 Mariposa can connect families to behavioral and physical health options (e.g., oral health, immunizations, behavioral health)</td>
<td>Continue promoting healthy habits curriculum preschools (e.g., healthy snacks/eating, physical activity)</td>
<td>Join partners to expand access to physical and behavioral health screening, referrals (e.g., mobile health vans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Goal</td>
<td>Join partners in stigma reduction campaign to encourage access to support, services (e.g., food, counseling)</td>
<td>Provide healthy habits training for new preschool teachers/staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Goal</td>
<td>Promote/ sponsor local healthy play groups (with partners) and safety (e.g., swim safety, fire safety, safe sleep campaigns)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td>Increased referrals to developmental/physical and behavioral health screening and services for children 0-5</td>
<td>Improved health status outcomes for children 0-5 (e.g., immunization rates, dental caries/cavities)</td>
<td>Improved access to screening, services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved nutrition, physical activity among preschool students</td>
<td>Improved health status outcomes for children 0-5 (e.g., immunization rates, dental caries/cavities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved nutrition, physical activity among preschool students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*First 5 Mariposa Strategic Plan 2021-24*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result Area</th>
<th>2021-2022 Objectives</th>
<th>2022-2023 Objectives</th>
<th>2023-2024 Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Families Goal</strong></td>
<td>Support and promote existing parenting support programs (play groups, parent/caregiver groups, etc.)</td>
<td>Increase awareness of trauma-informed services and systems among First 5 partners via jointly sponsored training, web/social media cross-promotions with partners</td>
<td>Expand access to parenting support for more Mariposa County families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Families will have the knowledge and ability to promote their children’s development.</em></td>
<td>Support adult and child screening in different settings for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to promote healing and resilience</td>
<td>Select and if feasible implement home visiting model to address needs of low-income, vulnerable families and children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators</strong></td>
<td>Participation in parenting support programs</td>
<td>Participation in parenting programs</td>
<td>Sustained participation in parenting program(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How can progress be tracked?</em></td>
<td>ACEs screening</td>
<td>Evaluation of parenting and home visiting program(s), including child/family cohort</td>
<td>Increased home visiting program capacity/participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased ACEs awareness among families</td>
<td>Reverse trend in increased child abuse and neglect rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased ACEs and trauma training among providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result Area</td>
<td>2021-2022 Objectives</td>
<td>2022-2023 Objectives</td>
<td>2023-2024 Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Services Goal**  
*Services will be culturally appropriate, integrated, and collaborative.* | - Increase collaborations with existing partners to provide culturally appropriate, integrated services (e.g., HHSA and others for children’s system of care and screenings; MCUSD for school readiness and warm handoffs)  
- Strengthen collaborations and outreach with organizations serving cultural/linguistic populations (e.g., Native American families, monolingual Spanish-speaking families) | - Join partners to evaluate children’s system of care gaps and identify First 5’s role in addressing gaps  
- Join partners in assessing specific ways to make services more culturally appropriate for Mariposa County families | - Continue to address system of care gaps  
- Implement recommended strategies for increasing culturally appropriate services (e.g., staff hiring/recruiting; staff training; materials translated into Spanish) |
| **Indicators**  
*(How can progress be tracked?)* | - Increased and smooth referrals to screening and other services (i.e., children not falling through cracks or multiple steps, delays to receive services) | - Increased participation in First 5 and other programs by diverse families and children  
- Increased awareness among families and providers about how to access services | - No wrong door; System of care implementation goals achieved with few gaps remaining |
Needs Assessment and Interview Findings

This section provides an overview of Mariposa County’s needs with respect to childcare and family support.

Gaps and Needs

Childcare Options for Working Parents

The child population in Mariposa County has been declining over time, as illustrated in the figure below. Yet, numerous recent assessments have documented the challenges that working parents in Mariposa County face in finding safe, quality care for their children. These include a 2019 childcare assessment survey jointly conducted by First 5, the Local Child Care Planning Council (LCPC), and Mariposa County’s Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA); a 2021 compilation of data for the LCPC; a 2017 Economic Vitality Strategy; and a 2019 community needs assessment conducted on behalf of HHSA.

Tourism is a major industry in Mariposa County; many adults work in the hospitality industry, which combines low wages with non-standard working hours, making it even more difficult to find childcare. In 2019, 35 percent of Mariposa County requests for childcare were for evening, weekend, or overnight childcare, compared to 12 percent for California overall.

Finding childcare is a particular challenge for those working in restaurants, bars, and hotels, but even parents working in other jobs find it difficult to match their work schedules and incomes to available childcare options. The California Child Care Resource and Referral Network’s 2020 Child Care Portfolio (combining data from Mariposa County and six other small California counties) analyzed the availability of childcare for working families and found that spaces were not available for 76.4 percent of children in 2019.
(up from 72.4 percent in 2014, reflecting a trend moving in the wrong direction).

**Poverty**
In 2019, approximately 35.5 percent of Mariposa County's children aged 0-5 (about 249 children) were living in families whose incomes place them below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) of $26,500 for a family of four. A significant subset—7.8 percent of all Mariposa County children—were living in deep poverty in the 2013-2017 period, defined as half of the FPL (or $13,250 for a family of four). This also helps explain why Mariposa County’s rates of children whose families participate in CalWORKs is higher than the state average (107.5 children per 1,000 in Mariposa County, compared to 81.6/1,000 for California). For many families (not just those officially living in poverty), the annual costs of licensed childcare—$10,669 for an infant or $7,950 for a preschooler—are out of reach.

**Child Abuse and Neglect**
All data for a population as small as Mariposa County’s need to be interpreted with caution, but even so, Mariposa County’s child abuse and neglect reports appear to be rising and exceed the state average (78.4 reports per 1,000 children in Mariposa County in 2018, compared to 52.9/1,000 in California). Possible explanations could include increased reporting, and/or multiple siblings from one family. In interviews, respondents noted the isolation that already affects many families in Mariposa County, as well as the added stressors of the pandemic and reduced contact with outsiders who might notice and report a child’s maltreatment.

While the overall trendline in the figure below demonstrates a decline over the past decade, the rates in Mariposa County are far more erratic than the state overall, and in recent years a slight uptick is observed. Moreover, data from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project presented below,
demonstrate a steep increase in children with entries into foster care starting in the fall of 2019.

Many interview respondents are familiar with the role of childhood trauma and adversity, sometimes referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or toxic stress, in impeding children’s social and emotional development, physical and behavioral health, and learning—as well as adult health outcomes later in life. HHSA has a small communications grant through the California Surgeon General’s ACEs Aware campaign, to increase the number of providers trained to identify and respond to ACEs through better screening. The high rates of reported abuse and neglect and extrapolating that many more children may be at risk suggest that trauma-informed care in a variety of settings (including childcare, health care, and schools, among others) could help address this issue. Evidence-based programs (EBPs) that help address child abuse and neglect, such as parenting classes, also were mentioned as specific options to consider.

**Support for Parents**

Many interview respondents observed that both formal and informal support for parents of young children—organized play groups,
moms’ groups, and parenting classes—appear to be less accessible than they once were. This was generally not a comment on the recent sheltering-in-place required because of COVID-19, but rather an observation that over time, fewer of these kinds of connections seemed to be available locally, which contributes to the stress and isolation of young families.

First 5 Strengths and Assets
First 5 Mariposa’s constraints as a small, one-person organization with a limited budget, operating in a small county, were widely recognized. Interview respondents were impressed that over the past 20 years, First 5 Mariposa has joined other First 5 Commissions across the state in improving school readiness (by supporting three and now two preschool programs with funding for staff and professional development, as well as a transitional kindergarten program), increasing access to health care (particularly oral health care in partnership with HHSA’s public health oral health team), and contributing to early literacy and other initiatives.

The tight-knit, caring community and strong sense of place in Mariposa County also were cited as assets, supporting not just First 5 but a range of organizations and services.

School Readiness Focus
As noted above, school readiness—in the form of supporting two preschools and a transitional kindergarten aide—is First 5 Mariposa’s signature program, accounting for 75 percent of the budget. The two preschools served approximately 34 children in 2019-20, 19 at the Lake Don Pedro preschool and 15 at Catheys Valley. As one respondent put it, “For those 30-plus kids, it’s fantastic! But what about all the others?” The transitional kindergarten instructional aide at Mariposa’s elementary school helps the teacher spend more time with the 25 children who attend.

As in the quote above, respondents were enthusiastic about First 5’s investment in supporting school readiness through the preschools, but just wished more children could benefit. Some also worried that a focus on school readiness, while admirable and understandable (due to budget constraints), crowds out other initiatives and partnerships. Some interviewees are concerned that the results of these investments are not easily understood in a recent evaluation report.
Others wondered how First 5 Mariposa could influence the school readiness of a larger group of children—e.g., highlighting steps parents could take through social media or other more broad-based, further-reaching messaging.

**Partnership Opportunities**

Interview respondents identified several opportunities for strengthened partnerships for First 5 Mariposa. They included:

- **HHSA** in general, particularly the evolving children’s system of care, which is designed to coordinate a range of services across sectors (physical and behavioral health, tobacco cessation, developmental screening, education, child welfare), ACEs awareness and infusing all services with trauma-informed care, and public health (e.g., oral health care screening).

- **HHSA**-supported and affiliated nonprofits, such as **Mariposa Safe Families** and **Native Solutions**, for potential support for parents, including home visiting for new parents and/or providing parenting classes accessible to more families, as well as programs operated through faith organizations.

- **MCUSD** currently provides a Parent Information & Student Activity Packet for preparing incoming kindergartners for school. The contents of the packet could be readily adapted into a kindergarten readiness assessment that could inform as to the strengths and needs of preschoolers that could guide curricula for the final year of preschool prior to kindergarten entry. In addition, Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses for high school students interested in early childhood education as a career.

- **County Economic Development** and **Planning** departments and **Mother Lode Job Training workforce development**, for linking the need for childcare to jobs; incorporating family and early childhood educator voices into planning for a licensed childcare center that could meet the needs of local working families (proposed as part of new funding for a proposed Recreation Center); providing training and support to those who might consider entering the childcare field as businesses.

- Civic groups such as the **Rotary and Lions clubs** for increasing awareness about the importance of investing in early childhood and raising First 5’s visibility in the community.

**First 5 Mariposa Contributions**

What else could First 5 Mariposa be doing to achieve its vision and mission? Again, interview respondents recognize First 5 Mariposa’s limited budget and staffing, yet remain hopeful about the potential to secure additional support through the types of
partnerships outlined above and through federal funding flowing to California counties and families via post-COVID relief.

Asked what kinds of contributions they envision for First 5 Mariposa, interviewees described the following, noting that these could be efforts First 5 contributes to, supports, or participates in, even if the organization is not necessarily leading them:

- Improving County-level **data** about children and families, including following a cohort of children and families, understanding needs beyond childcare, highlighting and promoting access to prevention services to address gaps (such as oral health care and immunization rates) and supporting and tracking school readiness of children beyond those served in First 5-funded preschool settings.

- Connecting First 5’s activities to **trauma-informed care** through training for preschool teachers, staff, and parents, to promote social-emotional learning for multiple generations. (As one interviewee put it, “You can never go wrong beefing up someone’s resilience!”)

- Providing additional ongoing support for young, new parents as well as other family members who are caring for young children, through **parenting classes** that emphasize early childhood development and education principles, trauma-informed care, and social-emotional learning, as well as more informal opportunities for parents and other caregivers to feel less isolated.

- Connecting parents and families to **existing systems of care**, such as HHSA’s behavioral health services (greater awareness and training for preschool teachers and staff could lead to interventions that help keep children in preschool); removing the stigma from seeking support for services for which families are eligible (e.g., CalFresh); more intentional alignment and warm hand-offs between preschool, transitional kindergarten, and the K-12 school system.

- Researching and, if feasible, selecting and implementing a **home visiting program** for low-income families.
Results

Asked what kinds of results they'd like to see in the next 3 to 5 years, interviewees added to the partnership and contribution ideas listed above:

- **Increasing First 5 Mariposa’s visibility** by developing a stronger web and social media presence to reach more parents with easily accessible information (e.g., on school readiness, such as First 5 Mono County’s website), building on existing partnerships with local agencies and organizations, reaching out to local organizations and individuals who could help support investments in early childhood (such as civic and business groups), and participating in peer learning groups and resources (such as the National Association of Counties’ Counties for Kids social media toolkit).

- Expanding **quality childcare options** in Mariposa County by partnering with workforce and MCUSD educators to recruit more students (both high school and adults) into the early childhood education field and working with Economic Development and other agency partners to reduce barriers and build interest, capacity, and skills for operating successful family childcare businesses.

- Supporting more low-barrier, easily accessible options for **parents** to learn about parenting skills, trauma and ACEs, resilience, social-emotional learning, and where/how to seek help from existing systems of care.

- Expanding access to **school readiness awareness** for parents beyond those served by the two funded preschools, such as through a countywide outreach and educational campaign, virtual workshops, webinars, and/or social media.

- Increasing childcare provider **awareness and training** of services available to children and families (particularly behavioral health care and developmental screening).

- Partnering with HHSA, Mariposa Safe Families, and others to research and, if feasible, plan to bring a viable **home visiting** program to Mariposa County to support parents’ understanding of child development and increase the county’s capacity to prepare its youngest residents for school readiness more broadly.

These goals for the program are reflected in the result area goals and objectives above.

In summary, Mariposa County, like many California counties, has struggled through an extremely difficult year of upheaval and uncertainty due to the dual economic and health impacts of COVID-19,
along with the ever-present threat of wildfires. Recovery is likely to take some time, particularly for low-income families with young children.

First 5 Mariposa has an important role to play in joining with existing and new organizational partners, county agencies, and local employers to support families with young children. The support for these families has the potential to affect multiple generations, make life easier for working parents, increase recruiting options and reduce turnover for employers, and boost educational achievement and healthy outcomes across the lifespan.

While the organization’s budget and staffing are lean, First 5 Mariposa’s impact is already significant for many families in Mariposa County. As the interviewees reiterated in many different ways, the organization’s potential is even greater, with opportunities for partnerships that blend funding, expertise, and coordination and make the most of the collaborative spirit and tight-knit community of which Mariposa County residents are justifiably proud.