First 5 LA Early Childhood Policy and Advocacy Fund (EC PAF)

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES FLEXIBLE FUND (COFF)

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What is COFF?

The **Community Opportunities Flexible Fund (COFF)** provides a broad range of funding opportunities for organizations that are working to **advance systems change** for **Los Angeles children prenatal to 5 and their families**.

Funds may be used to help build **community connections** and **elevate voices** of those with **lived experiences**.

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What is Systems Change?

"Systems change is the process of addressing the root causes of social issues. Unlike direct service work that provides immediate relief to individuals, systems change aims to create long-lasting change by shifting the structures, policies, processes, and power dynamics that perpetuate these problems. It takes into account the intricate political, social, and economic factors contributing to these issues and actively seeks to change them."

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What is the Difference between Direct Services and Systems Change?

ISSUE AREA	DIRECT SERVICES APPROACH	SYSTEMS CHANGE APPROACH
Increased Access to Preschool	Provide scholarships for preschool	Work to change the way the preschool system is funded so everyone can afford it
Increased Consumption of Healthy Foods	Offer nutrition classes to parents	Remove barriers to getting CalFresh so more people can get access to nutritious foods

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COFF Funds Must Support

First 5 LA's Mission: Every child in Los Angeles County reaches their full developmental potential throughout the critical years of prenatal to age 5.

First 5 LA's Commitment to Equity: "We honor the wisdom of our communities, recognizing that their assets hold the key to dismantling systemic barriers and forging a path to racial justice, as we champion opportunity for all."

First 5 LA's Three Goals: ensure that the needs of children prenatal to age 5 and their families are met across a continuum of **basic** (physiological and safety), **psychological** (esteem and love and belonging) and **self-fulfillment** (self-actualization) needs, including:

- Having their basic needs met
- Having nurturing relationships and environments
- Having a solid foundation for well-being, lifelong learning and success.

Types of Activities COFF Supports

Funds can be used to engage in a variety of activities associated with systems change, including:

- ❑ Community engagement; Community convening; Cultural celebrations

- ❑ Building/sustaining coalitions and networks; Grassroots relationship-building

- ❑ Creating culturally-affirming narratives and agendas; Oral histories; Communications campaigns

- ❑ Support for workforce development benefitting children 0 to 5

- ❑ Policy implementation and monitoring

- ❑ Capacity building, such as learning about the legislative/budgeting process; Policy and systems education

- ❑ Educating gubernatorial and other candidates for elected office on early care and education and other 0 to 5 issues

- ❑ Research and data collection to inform public policy, including community-driven research

- ❑ Support for families impacted by climate, environmental harm or emergencies (*new)

- ❑ Rapid response to changing federal policies and political landscape (*new)

- ❑ Support for immigrant families impacted by changing policies (*new)

- ❑ Policy work focused on guaranteed income (*new)

- ❑ Other activities that help build grassroots connections and elevate the voices of people most impacted

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Under First 5 LA by laws, no funds may be used for grassroots lobbying

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COFF Eligibility

- Los Angeles-serving nonprofit organizations, fiscally sponsored projects, social-benefit businesses, and government or tribal entities.

- Applicant's total annual budget must be under $6 million.

- Prior experience with applying for grants or prior relationship with First 5 LA is not required.

Funding Priorities

➤ **Systems Connected:** The proposed activities clearly support **system change** efforts benefiting children **prenatal to 5** and their families in **LA County**.

➤ **Community Driven Involvement:** The proposed activity attempts to build community connections and voice of people most impacted by inequities. Led by community members with lived experience of systems impacting children prenatal to 5 and their families.

➤ **Actionable:** The proposal seems feasible within the described timeframe and budget. The applicant appears to have the capacity, capability, and knowledge to execute the work.

Application Process

- After submission, a member of the Community Partners team may follow up to discuss your idea in further detail.

- Depending on the nature and size of the request, you may be asked for additional information before final approval from First 5 LA staff.

- Award notifications may take up to 10 weeks following the application due date.

How to Apply

- Application Link

- Application Due Dates

- Application Guidelines

→ https://communitypartners.org/ecpaf

Applications are submitted via **Submittable** on the following browsers

 Google Chrome

 Mozilla Firefox

 Apple Safari

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Need help?

- Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions (regularly updated) at www.CommunityPartners.org/ecpaf

- Join us for office hours via Zoom. These are open Q & A sessions, not presentations. Offered in English and Spanish. Register at www.CommunityPartners.org/ecpaf

- Email Priscilla Romero at promero@CommunityPartners.org

Helpful Links

o Funding Guidelines and FAQs: https://CommunityPartners.org/ecpaf

o Understanding Systems Change:
https://www.sjpla.org/news/is-your-initiative-systems-change-focused

o Information on Grassroots Lobbying:
https://bolderadvocacy.org/2021/02/10/lobbying-series-part-3-grassroots-lobbying

oFirst 5 LA and The Early Childhood Policy and Advocacy Fund:
https://www.first5la.org/early-childhood-policy-and-advocacy-fund-ecpaf/