

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

Community Opportunity Flexible Fund (COFF) - Application Overview



COFF Overview

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

Funds must specifically focus on **Goal 1** of [First 5 LA's strategic plan](#), which states that children prenatal to age 5 and their families have their basic needs met, resulting in the following outcomes:

- **Reduce infant mortality**
- **Alleviate poverty**
- **Decrease housing insecurity**



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.”*



Examples of Direct Services and Systems Change Approaches

ISSUE AREA	DIRECT SERVICES APPROACH	SYSTEMS CHANGE APPROACH
Reduce housing insecurity	Provide rental assistance payments	Advocate for policy changes that create more affordable housing units
Reduce infant mortality	Offer parent care packages with education materials newborn essentials	Monitor hospitals to ensure that policies that address implicit biases are implemented effectively



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 Goal 1: ensure that children prenatal to age 5 and their families have their basic needs met.

Reduce infant mortality (1.1 REDUCE the annual number of deaths of children under 1 year old per 1,000 live births in Los Angeles County to 3.5% by the end of 2029).

Alleviate poverty (1.2 REDUCE the annual percent of households with children prenatal through age 5 in Los Angeles County living in poverty to 15.4% by the end of 2029)

Decrease housing insecurity (1.3 REDUCE the annual percent of households with children prenatal through age 5 in Los Angeles County who experience housing insecurity to 52% by the end of 2029).

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
- ❑ Research and data collection to inform public policy, including community-driven research
- ❑ Support for families impacted by climate, environmental harm or emergencies
- ❑ Rapid response to changing federal policies and political landscape
- ❑ Support for immigrant families impacted by changing policies
- ❑ Policy work focused on guaranteed income
- ❑ Other activities that help build grassroots connections and elevate the voices of people most impacted

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

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.
- Work must specifically focus on reducing infant mortality, reduce poverty, and/or reduce housing insecurity.
- As a one-time grant, personnel costs may not exceed 30% FTE per position.



Funding Priorities

- **Systems Connected:** The proposed activities clearly support system change efforts benefiting children prenatal to 5 and their families in LA County.
- **Address basic needs:** Work must reduce 1) infant mortality, 2) poverty, and/or 3) housing insecurity for children prenatal to 5 and their families.
- **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 8 weeks following the application due date.



How to Apply

Visit: <https://communitypartners.org/ecpaf>

Open, "Community Opportunities Flexible Fund - UPCOMING DEADLINE AUGUST 3, 2026" to view application guidelines and scroll to find "CLICK HERE TO APPLY FOR THE COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES FLEXIBLE FUND"

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



Google Chrome



Apple Safari



Mozilla Firefox



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

- Funding Guidelines and FAQs: <https://CommunityPartners.org/ecpaf>
- Understanding Systems Change:
<https://www.sjpla.org/news/is-your-initiative-systems-change-focused>
- Information on Grassroots Lobbying:
<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/direct-and-grass-roots-lobbying>
- First 5 LA and The Early Childhood Policy and Advocacy Fund:
<https://www.first5la.org/early-childhood-policy-and-advocacy-fund-ecpaf/>

THANK YOU!

