



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SYSTEM CHANGE: A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING AND ANALYSIS



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integrating information for change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide reflection and guidance on system change for First 5 Marin as it enters its 5-year strategic planning review and to inform a more intentional evaluation framework around system change. A potential framework, Sustainable Community System Change, was developed based on an extensive literature review and the guiding values, operating principles, and implicit and explicit intentions of First 5 Marin to support the development of a more integrated, inclusive and adaptive system of services and supports for children ages 0-5.

The SCSC framework provides categories describing key factors (referred to as “levers”) affecting change within systems (comprised of people, organizations and communities). Describing the nature of these levers – the way they operate – can help identify the status of the system along a continuum, in its transition towards sustainable system change. The validity of this framework was assessed through its application to qualitative data presented by First 5 Marin funded projects as well as through interviews and focus groups with key partners, collectively considered our Study Group. This was accomplished through the development and application of a coding scheme. The coding scheme was developed to account for descriptions of ‘how’ and ‘to what end’ individuals and organizations made reference to the concepts presented in the levers of change/stages of change, as well as the 5A’s of Access.

Five questions framed the testing of the Sustainable Community System Change framework:

1. How shall we define System Change in Marin?
2. What are the key levers of change?
3. Where has First 5 Marin made the most significant contributions?
4. At what stage is Marin along the continuum of change?
5. Is this a valid framework for First 5 Marin?

A working definition of Sustainable System Change, vetted with our Study Group, is as follows:

Human and community service systems include multiple organizations that may or may not be connected to one another. Meaningful sustainable change within these systems requires:

- *A clear and shared vision of overall purpose and related goals;*
- *Intentional fostering of linkages and relationships; and*
- *Organizations working in concert--leveraging resources to build knowledge, partnership and processes.*

Application of the SCSC to the experiences and perceptions of system change among funded partners and other stakeholders yielded a depth and breadth of information about the changes that have occurred in Marin. As with all efforts, there is an external context which can either facilitate or prevent progress. These “foundational elements” underlie and operate across the levers. Important foundational elements frequently described as supporting movement along the continuum of change include: 1) trust; 2) history; 3) willingness; and 4) size and scale of Marin.

Within the First 5 Marin community, several levers continued to surface as primary at this point in time in the work towards achieving Sustainable Community System Change: 1) Communication and Networking; 2) Shared Principles and Norms; and 3) Governance and Leadership. With regard to impact, First 5 Marin has had

the greatest impact in the area of access (e.g., accessibility, affordability, accommodation, appropriateness and availability), human capacity building and financial resources. Through the efforts of its funded partners, children ages 0-5 and their families, as well as the providers who work with them, have greater accessibility to a continuum of services and supports which promote self-sufficiency, self-efficacy, school readiness, health literacy, and health and well-being (physical, mental and cognitive).

In addition to program and project level impact, First 5 Marin has had an impact through its role as a convener, facilitator, and confidante, often initiating and contributing to significant system change. Examples include:

- Children's Health Initiative
- Partnership with Marin Community Clinic resulting in six (6) pediatric dental chairs
- Pediatric physician training on the use of "Ages and Stages," a developmental screening tool within the primary care setting
- More extensive developmental screening county-wide, as well as an increased number of children with special needs remaining in traditional child care settings
- Piloting the California School Information System ID in pre-K settings to allow for longitudinal tracking and understanding of the impact of early care and education on the school readiness of children as they move in and through the K-12 system.

As for the status of the county of Marin with regard to Sustainable Community System Change, using the SCSC as reference, Stakeholders interviewed noted both progress made and opportunities on certain levers. Notable changes within the broader countywide system across all subsystems (bureaucratic, professional and community) were apparent in three areas: 1) a greater sense of clarity and understanding of organizational goals and roles; 2) increased communication among stakeholders; and most notably, 3) an improved willingness to explore collaboration.

Overall, the findings are supportive of the Sustainable Community System Change framework including the working definition. Study Group participants, who were diverse in their experience and roles, found it to be relevant to their work with First 5 Marin, as did those who worked in other systems. A depth of evidence that spanned programs, creating a picture of system change at the program and organizational levels was apparent when the SCSC was applied.

It is recommended that First 5 Marin consider the following as it engages its strategic planning process:

- Formally adopt the SCSC as an outcome and a specific strategy in its next strategic plan
- Develop specific strategies to tip SCSC Levers of Change identified through this work
- Identify and develop specific evaluation measures to understand and document movement along the continuum and the influence of specific levers of change
- Update current program and initiative scopes of work and reporting tools to reflect SCSC elements
- Continue the work with the Shared Vision Committee and ground its next steps in the SCSC

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This report provides First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission (First 5 Marin) with an opportunity to both reflect on its accomplishments to date with regard to Sustainable Community System Change (SCSC), as well as provide greater clarity and direction for potential next steps. As it develops its second 5-year strategic planning, this information will assist the Commission and its partners in determining the best use of its resources given the current context and projected changes and trends in Marin.

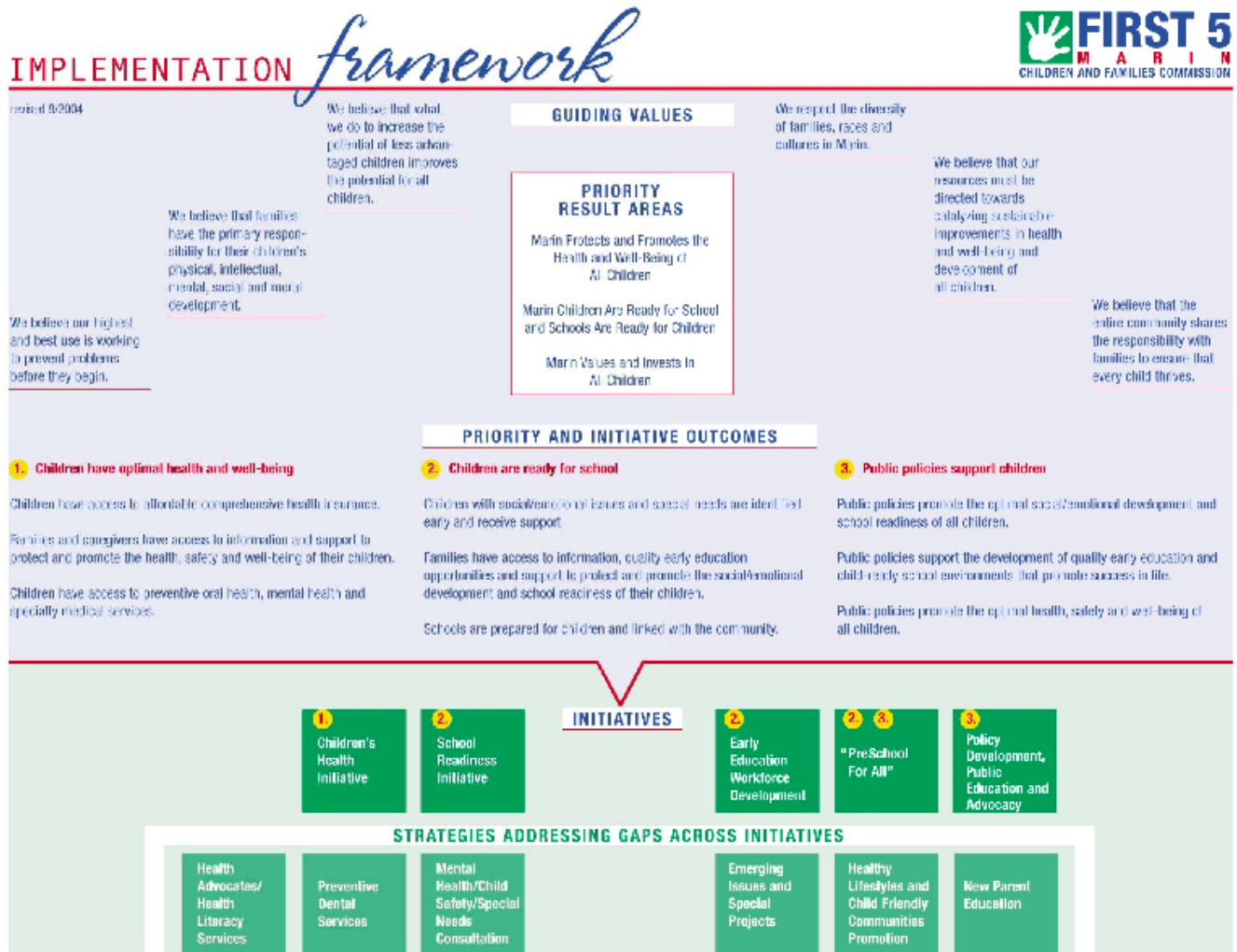
The following sections present the data sources that informed our work, methods of analysis, a working framework for sustainable community system change and findings from the testing of that framework, including its validity.

History

First 5 Marin's history is important background for understanding this report. It sets the stage for its work to date and the values and principles that have informed its choices and decisions.

In January 2004, the Commission began its second intensive strategic planning process. The purpose of the process was twofold: 1) to assess and examine lessons learned over the first five years of operations, and 2) to determine the best use of the Commission going forward in order to achieve results on the highest priorities for all children in Marin County 0-5 years of age. During the second year of its first strategic plan, in 2002, the Commission identified nine outcomes under three strategic goals. At a retreat held in January 2004, the Commission, with participation by members of the public, re-examined, aligned, and reduced the number of those outcomes within a framework that would consolidate efforts under strategic initiatives addressing multiple outcomes. The Commission also drafted a vision, theory of change (how come not in here? Not really relevant?), operating principles and program selection criteria on which to ground decision-making. Past and on-going feedback and discussions with the community, including those funded and not funded by First 5 Marin, informed this work.

Figure 1



As the Commission engaged in planning, several key lessons from the first four years of operation surfaced. These lessons influenced the direction of the strategic planning.

- The Commission does not have enough resources to address all of the priorities for children 0-5.
- The Commission must expand its role from funding projects to influencing lasting change. To do this, the Commission must:
 - Realign efforts toward building sustained and sustainable community commitment to supporting all children;
 - Use its resources to focus on community education, advocacy and leveraging all available resources to affect change;
 - Move from grant-making that funds individual programs to framing and funding;
 - Commission initiatives that seed fresh approaches, best practices and big ideas; and, replicate and expand models that address multiple outcomes (e.g., School Readiness Initiative).

In addition, First 5 Marin articulated a vision, values and operating principles to guide its efforts.

First 5 Marin Vision

Together with families, communities and other partners, the First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission will create a Marin in which the health and welfare of all of our children is at the core of decisions at every level of our political and public institutions in every community. Children will have access to affordable health care, opportunities that promote success in school, and they will live in families and communities that provide for their optimal health, safety and well-being. Families will have the knowledge and tools to advocate for their children and there will be understanding across and among communities of people about the varying opportunities and needs of children. As a community, we will understand and acknowledge that what we do to increase the potential of less-advantaged children improves the potential for all children.

First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission will be a trusted and accessible leader, partner and resource engaging families, children and organizations in creating solutions in a way that is respectful, inclusive, egalitarian, and responsive. We will convey information about best and promising practices to communities, facilitate integration of those practices into local systems, and connect systems for the good of children and families.

Guiding Values

- We believe that families have the primary responsibility for their children's physical, intellectual, mental, social and moral development.
- We believe that the entire community shares responsibility with families to ensure that every child thrives.
- We believe that what we do to increase the potential of less-advantaged children improves the potential for all children.
- We respect and value the diversity of families, races and cultures in Marin.
- We believe that our resources must be directed toward catalyzing sustainable improvements in the health, well-being and development of all children in Marin.
- We believe our highest and best use is working to prevent problems before they begin.

Operating Principles

- ✓ We will consider the highest and best use of Commission resources to affect change.
- ✓ We will consider actions based on the potential to build and sustain commitment over time.
- ✓ We will exercise leadership and take bold action to affect change.
- ✓ We will use our influence to convene and leverage all resources and assets in order to understand issues and develop and implement solutions.
- ✓ We will be accessible to the community and make every effort to engage broad sectors to understand problems and participate in developing solutions.
- ✓ We will act with fairness and consistency in our dealings with the community and our partners.
- ✓ We will engage families, children and organizations in a way that is respectful, inclusive, egalitarian, responsive and tailored to the community.

- ✓ We will expect the best outcome, work to overcome barriers and anticipate that others can and will participate.
- ✓ We will tap into the expertise of the community, utilize data, draw from promising practices and evidenced-based models, and use multiple approaches to build solutions.
- ✓ We will operate from a solid vision, make necessary hard choices and set clear guidelines and limitations.
- ✓ We will communicate openly about our decision-making and our rationale.
- ✓ We will assess and realign our efforts based on on-going community feedback and evaluation evidence.

Several phrases embedded in these frameworks allude to the Commission's interest and commitment to exploring Sustainable Community System Change:

- Resources must be directed toward catalyzing sustainable improvements
- Highest and best use of Commission resources to affect change
- Potential to build and sustain commitment over time
- Exercise leadership and take bold action to affect change
- Use our influence to convene and leverage all resources and assets in order to understand issues and develop and implement solutions
- Accessible to the community and make every effort to engage broad sectors to understand problems and participate in developing solutions

In addition to the concepts presented in the Commission's Strategic Plan, an access framework also provided insight to dimensions of system change that First 5 Marin sought to affect. In Marin, Access is described broadly as the ability to obtain needed services and supports and considers the following elements¹:

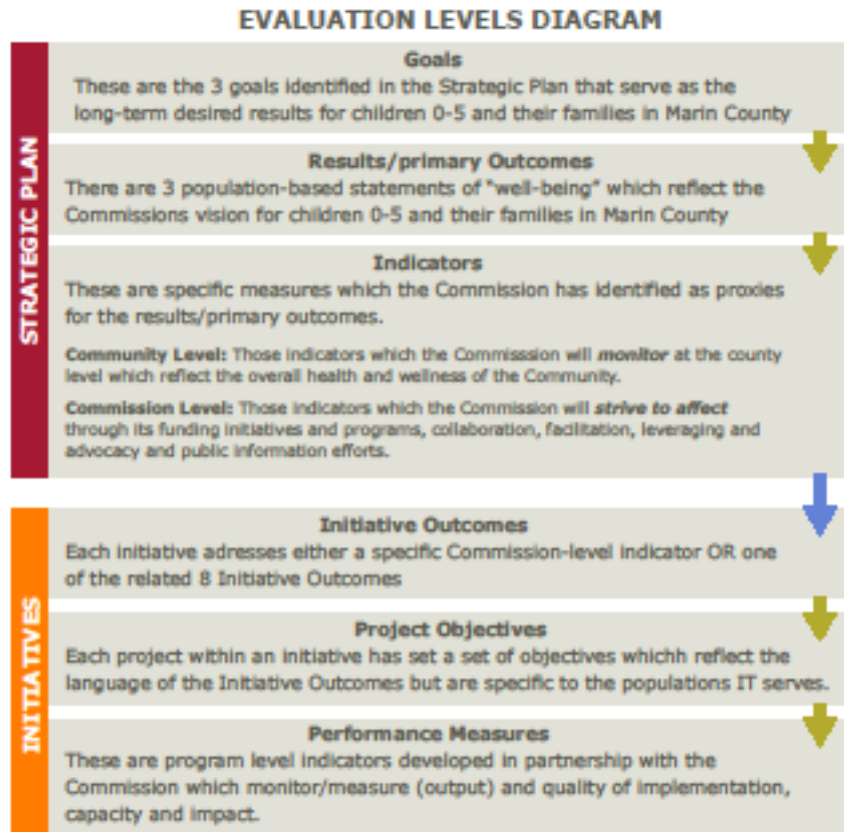
1. **Availability** refers to the adequacy of the supply of providers, of facilities and of specialized programs and services/supports
2. **Accessibility** refers to the relationship between the location of services/supports and the location of clients taking into account client transportation resources, distance and ease of travel.
3. **Accommodation** refers to the manner in which the service resources are organized in order to facilitate client usage such as hours of operation, staffing and the clients' perceptions of these factors and their appropriateness.
4. **Affordability** refers to the relationship of the price (i.e., payment options of purchase) of the services; the clients' ability to pay and their perception of the worth of said services.
5. **Appropriateness** refers to the interrelationship between clients' perception of personal and practice characteristics of the providers and the actual characteristics of existing providers such as sex and ethnicity and those that the provider may have of the client (i.e., cultural competency).

¹ Penchansky, R. and Thomas, J. W., "The Concept of Access: Definition and relationship to consumer satisfaction," *Medical Care* 1908:19:127-40.

These ideas coupled with re-occurring themes in discussions with the Executive Director and the Commission over the past several years served as part of the impetus for this report.

Another factor was the limitation of the existing evaluation design. First 5 Marin has made great strides in developing and tracking performance and outcome measure data for its projects. This design has evolved over time resulting in increased meaningfulness and accuracy. Yet, something was missing. The midyear and year-end narrative reports contained a wealth of information about changes in human, organizational and system behavior for which there was no formal methodology for analyzing and understanding across funded projects.

Figure 2: First 5 Marin Evaluation Framework



Given this background, coupled with increasing interest and need to better articulate the changes happening across systems, including the thinking and behaviors of individuals within those systems, First 5 Marin and jdcPartnerships embarked upon a process to institutionalize a Sustainable Community System Change Framework (SCSC)

By adopting a SCSC framework, First 5 Marin will be able to bring a more rigorous analytical lens to the qualitative data collected. This will provide insight and validation to those engaged directly in the work;

highlight the changes that have occurred and identify opportunities for future efforts. The findings from and the decisions made about how to move forward with SCSC will be incorporated into the current strategic planning activities and inform the next stage of the evaluation design.

OUR APPROACH

A variety of data sources and methods of analysis, including primary and secondary research, informed this report. They included a literature review, key informant interviews, focus groups, fiscal data and year-end reports. This section presents a description of those data sources and the methods used to analyze them.

Data Sources

The **Literature Review** included more than 200 documents spanning multiple fields including sociology, health, human and social service, community organizing and development, and so forth. Our intent was to understand what, if any, frameworks or models for system change existed that acknowledged multiple dimensions and subsystems and were adaptive in their design. A schema was developed (see *Figure 4*) based on the guiding principles in First 5 Marin's strategic plan, other dimensions related to defining system change, perceived benefits to individuals, organizations/agencies and communities, and other program and organizational impacts. The resulting annotated bibliography includes close to 80 citations, which informed the model for sustainable community system change in Marin (*Appendix A*).

Interviews with seven of the key partners in the larger systems (i.e., early care and education, public school system, county health, etc.) with which First 5 Marin works were also conducted. The First 5 Marin Executive Director identified the interview sample. Given the size of the sample, findings are informational – not representative. All interviews were by phone and approximately 45-60 minutes in length, digitally recorded and transcribed by an external vendor.

Prior to the call, interviewees received the working definition of system change as well as the levels/stages of change framework. Each interview began with the interviewee providing some background on their position and role as it related to the work of The First 5 Children and Families Commission. Interviews covered six key areas:

1. Review of the working definition of sustainable community system change;
2. Discussion of the levers;
3. Identification of critical steps and/or decisions that have supported system change across the program and service areas associated with First 5 Marin;
4. Potential barriers to continuing this work;
5. Lessons learned; and
6. Potential opportunities to address system change with regard to children 0-5 and their families.

INTERVIEWEES REPRESENTED

Marin County Child Care Commission
 United Way of the Bay Area
 Marin Community Foundation
 Bahia Vista Elementary School
 County of Marin DHHS
 Marin County Office of Education

Focus Groups with members of three of the four initiatives funded by First 5 Marin were conducted. They included representatives from School Readiness, Special Needs Mental Health and Health Advocacy Health Literacy. In total, 16 individuals participated in the focus groups. Overall, participants were diverse and reflected differing ages, groups, ethnic and educational backgrounds, as well as differing levels of experience and roles. All participants were female. Focus Groups were in English, digitally recorded and transcribed by an external vendor.

The Public Education and Policy Initiative (PEPI) is the youngest of First 5 Marin's initiatives and structured differently than the others. However, several of the key informant interviewees sit on the Shared Values Committee, which is leading a planning effort as part of the continued development of the PEPI.

Three areas were discussed in the Focus Groups: 1) the proposed definition of Sustainable Community System Change; 2) participants' experiences in affecting change and examples of change using the proposed framework as reference; and 3) insights regarding potential levers of change that First 5 Marin could influence. Participants were encouraged to frame their responses within the context of the initiative, if possible. Focus Group questions included the following:

1. Given this definition of system change, how do you define "success" with regard to system change?
2. How important has, relationship building and trust been to First 5 Marin's work? Why?
3. Given the definition of system change and the current context of your work within Marin, how have these relationships supported system change efforts?
4. How aware are you of and/or what has been your role in the decision making process that has accompanied efforts to build relationships and effect system change?
5. Looking forward, which are the most critical...etc.?
6. For these, at what stage are you presently?
7. What are some of the potential barriers in continuing this work and building on system change efforts to-date?

Year End Reports have been part of the evaluation plan since its adoption. The 25 currently funded partners submit this report annually by July 15 for the previous fiscal year. The report has quantitative and narrative elements. The latter includes a series of questions designed to support reflection and integration of the information into program practice and to explore implications as they relate to program effectiveness. It has been refined over the years as both the Commission's efforts and that of its funded partners evolve. Past iterations included a section asking about the program's efforts in the areas of accessibility, cultural competency, etc. We determined that a more clearly articulated outcome around system change would lead to better questions and analysis.

Currently, the program narrative covers the following areas: Performance Measures, Client and Service Demographic Data, System Collaboration and Coordination, and Information Management and Evaluation. Following are examples of questions:

- What new relationships did you forge with other institutions in the county because of your relationship with First 5 Marin?
- What system change efforts, including policy change efforts, do you think would support your project goals and objectives?

Financial Data is reported quarterly to First 5 Marin by its funded partners. It includes the budget and the percent of total funding that First 5 Marin represents as part of the whole. In past years, the amount of leveraged funding has been part of the local reporting to First 5 California annually. The state commission suspended this requirement in 2007-08. However, First 5 Marin continues to track this information.

ANALYSIS

The interviewees and focus group participants constitute our Study Group. Although a small sample, the Study Group is a cross section of individuals within and across systems. It includes those who work closely with individuals and families on a daily basis as well as others in policy and grant-making positions at county and regional levels. In addition, the group reflects those who have been in the field for many years and others who are new to the work. Although primarily female, there is age, ethnic and educational variance across the Study Group. We believe this diversity provides a valid and reliable initial testing of the framework

The richness of the qualitative data provided by the Study Group, as well as the narrative reports from funded partners, necessitated a rigorous approach to analysis. In addition, we wanted to test the next generation of a framework that more fully integrated multiple dimensions of system change, and which was rooted in an understanding of the roles that individuals, organizations and community context play.

A key finding from the literature review was the discovery of a community-based system change framework from *Using a Systems Change Approach to Building Communities* (Parsons, InSites Boulder, Co 1997), which included stages and levers of change. The framework identified system change as both a process and an outcome.

The Sustainable Community System Change (SCSC) Framework is based on three core principles:²

1. We must adopt “systems thinking and learning.” This includes looking at systems holistically – not only at the parts but also at the relationships between the parts – as well as seeing that systems are ever changing. Thus, we must see ourselves as lifelong learners responsible for modifying and adjusting systems.
2. We must define and often redefine the purposes of our systems and the results expected from them. Both purpose(s) and result(s) need to be clearly articulated and emphasized.
3. We must reshape the community (including all the individual communities which rest within) to be one grounded in the strengths and the hopes – not just needs – of those that the system often serves.

² Parsons, 1997, Pg 41

SCSC contains two key elements, Stages of Change and Levers of Change. The former, Stages of Change, refers to the six stages that individuals (and thus organizations and systems) move through, as depicted in the graphic below (Figure 3a). Regardless of the Stage of Change, there are nine components which, when engaged, can become Levers of Change. Each Lever operates differently depending on the Stage of Change as illustrated in Figure 3b on the following page.

Figure 3a: Sustainable Community System Change Framework – Stages of Change

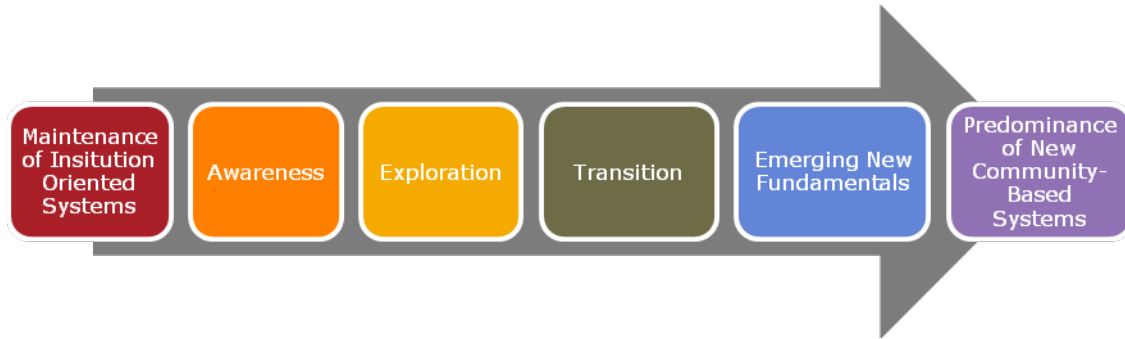


Figure 3b: Sustainable System Change Framework - Levers of Change

SHARED PRINCIPLES AND NORMS

Assumption: Activity Oriented; Norm: Competition; Top Down Style	Become conscious of dysfunctional norms	New norms consciously used in designing projects or programs	Spotty applications of new norms within entities	Leaders attend to congruence of actions with new norms and assumptions	Assumption: Results Oriented Norm: Flexible, Adaptive, Inclusive
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VISION AND GOALS

Focus on short-term successes and strategies	Recognition of need for a vision & goals within organizations	Continued shared vision development seen as a major force of change	Continued shared vision development seen as a major force of change	Continued shared vision development seen as a major force of change	Continual attention to public involvement in dynamic systems
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STAKEHOLDER ROLES

Leaders, professional staff primarily involved in decision making	Beginning recognition of the diversity of stakeholder involvement	Structured efforts to gather citizen and other stakeholder input	Community residents becoming very vocal & involved in shaping vision	Emerging comfort with each other as equal partners	Continual attention to public involvement in dynamic systems
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PROJECTS, PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Built on narrowly focused organizational norms	Discussion of cross-agency projects with similar visions	Projects begin connecting short-term results with long-term vision	Projects comfortably link short-term and long-term results	Projects become a way to change standard operating mode of agencies	Assumption-based initiatives develop from projects
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HUMAN CAPACITY BUILDING

Job training programs narrowly focused and/or outdated Limited or unfocused volunteerism philanthropy	Discussion of cross-agency projects with similar visions	Networking within/ across current systems and groups encourages as a way to build capacity	More community-based ways to learning & doing becoming evident	Human resources increasingly utilized on a regular basis Committed corps of volunteers emerges	Volunteerism and philanthropy are leveraged to keep formal and informal systems flexible, dynamic
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GOVERNANCE/LEADERSHIP

Individual community members expected to implement but not make key policy decisions	Collaborative initiatives discussed, issues of their governance explored	More people from community invited to participate in key policy meetings and give input	New stakeholders invited to give input and make decisions Decisions made about new roles & responsibilities	Decisions made about how to hold each other accountable Emerging comfort with new roles & responsibilities	Decisions made about how to hold each other accountable Emerging comfort with new roles & responsibilities
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COMMUNICATION/NETWORKING

Inform public after decisions are made and/or effort is moving forward One way communication	Recognize that early communication with stakeholders is critical	Monitor successes and problems in new communications, networking methods	Communication patterns begin to develop that broaden dialogue and support community-based ideas	Two-way communication strategy is in place with active participation from diverse stakeholders	Developing internal capacity for generating assets and external supporting collaborations
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FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Emphasis on bringing in outside resources Resources used to support what has been done in the past	Recognize that early communication with stakeholders is critical	Looking at social assets of community for resources (traditional assets & funding group)	Special funds strategically used to solidify new ways of operating	Developing internal capacity for generating assets and external supporting collaborations	Developing internal capacity for generating assets and external supporting collaborations
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The interviews and focus groups provided an opportunity to test the initial validity of the framework for its applicability to the work of First 5 Marin. We also wanted to test the Sustainable Community System Change framework as an analytical lens for the narrative reports provided by the Commission's funded partners. This was accomplished through the development and application of a coding scheme presented below (Figure 4). The coding scheme was developed to account for descriptions of how and to what end individuals and organizations made reference to the concepts presented in the levers of change/stages of change, as well as the 5A's of Access (refer to page 6). Additional codes were generated to account for descriptions of projects, interventions, and other activities, as well as specific benefits and/or challenges to system change with regard to individuals, organizations and community. Interviews were coded by two researchers and reviewed to establish an agreed upon set of codes. Qualitative data analysis software (*Atlas-ti*) was used to assign codes to interview segments, focus groups and year-end reports to produce code-specific outputs. Code-specific segments were synthesized and summarized informing our findings.

Figure 4: Sustainable Community System Change Coding Schema

Code Description	Code
Definition of a System, System Change	SysDef
Descriptions:	
Key Features / elements in systemic change	SysKey
Foundational Requirements / Pre-requisites	SysPre
Relationships among/between key elements / stages	SysRels
Key Players in Systemic Change Efforts	SysPpl
Levers of Change:	
Shared Principles and Norms	LOCNorms
Visions and Goals	LOCVision
Stakeholder Roles	LOCStake
Projects, Programs, and Initiatives	LOCProg
Human Capacity Building	LOCHumCap
Governance/Leadership	LOCGov
Communications/Networking	LOCCom
Financial Resources	LOCFin
Information, strategies, approaches related to FFM sys change aspects:	
Access In general	5A-general
Availability	5A-Avail
Accessibility	5A-Access
Accommodation	5A-Accom
Affordability	5A-Afford
Appropriateness	5A-Appro
Interagency Collaboration	Interagency
Civic Engagement	CIVIC
Raising/Leveraging Funds	LevFunds
Service Quality (incl. evidence-based practices, research)	Qual
Advocating for policy changes or new legislation	Advo
Issues of the Role of Policy in Systemic Change Efforts	PolicyIssues
Issues of cultural appropriateness and competence (incl. working in different communities)	CultComp
Strategies for building organizational capacity for systemic change	OrgCapacity
Inappropriate/detrimental strategies and approaches	NegStrat
Challenges Limitations	SysChal
Benefits	
Sys change for Organizations	SysBenOrg
Sys change for Communities	SysBenCom
Sys change for Individuals	SysBenIndv

OUR FINDINGS

Five questions framed our testing of the *Sustainable Community System Change* framework and findings:

1. How shall we define System Change in Marin?
2. What are the key levers of change?
3. Where has First 5 Marin made the most significant contributions?
4. At what stage is Marin county along the continuum of change?
5. Is this a valid framework for First 5 Marin?

Defining System Change in Marin

In collaboration with First 5 Marin leadership, a working definition to describe “*Sustainable Community System Change*” was developed. Existing frameworks including the 5A’s of Access, and the Commission’s values and operating principles included in their FY2004-2009 Strategic Plan informed the definition.

Working Definition

The definition is based on the premise that three systems – bureaucratic/public, professional, and community – are intertwined and comprise the social systems of a community. Traditional efforts addressing system change tend toward the bureaucratic and professional, creating and sustaining an institutional/organizational focus. The proposed definition recognizes a different paradigm: a shift toward a community-professional combination, grounded in the strengths, capacity and desires of the community.

Human and community service systems include multiple organizations that may or may not be connected to one another. Meaningful sustainable change within these systems requires:

- *A clear and shared vision of overall purpose and related goals;*
- *Intentional fostering of linkages and relationships; and*
- *Organizations working in concert--leveraging resources to build knowledge, partnership and processes.*

Interviewed stakeholders and focus group participants were asked for their reactions to this definition, including what they thought might be added. Overall, respondents had a positive response to the definition, finding it both accurate and complete. Amendments and suggestions were minimal. The most substantial suggestion related to considering wording that better reflects the role(s) of those whom the system seeks to impact. However, given the purpose of the definition, it was decided not to change it.

Key Levers Influencing System Change

To guide discussions with stakeholders and analysis of multiple data sources (stakeholder interviews, partner/initiative focus groups and year-end reports), a framework for describing factors and stages of system change was adapted. This framework provides categories describing key factors (referred to as “levers”) affecting change within systems (comprised of people, organizations and communities). Describing the nature of these levers—the way they operate—can help identify the status of the system, along a continuum, in its transition towards sustainable system change.

Across data sources, several levers continued to surface as primary at this point in time in the work towards achieving *Sustainable Community System Change*: 1) Communication and Networking; 2) Shared Principles and Norms; and 3) Governance and Leadership.

Communication and Networking

In interviews, focus groups, and year-end reports, stakeholders and partners talked about the primacy of effective communication and networking strategies that facilitate overall awareness as well as collaboration and cross-agency work to more effectively and efficiently meet client/community needs.

Stakeholders described their opinions regarding the importance of communication and networking in influencing system change, noting them as critical to effective cross-agency collaboration. Stakeholders also described how broader effective communication about what programs are doing and where they are succeeding also increases awareness and informs wider community decisions about resource allocation and program development.

Among funded partners, there was discussion of First 5 Marin’s initiation of and support for collaborative meetings, such as the Special Needs Mental Health Roundtable, which are structured to provide opportunities to share information about programs and practices and to meet client needs through case management. Funded partners noted that without First 5 Marin, the roundtable meeting would “be a luxury we probably wouldn’t allow ourselves” (*SNMH Focus Group Participant*). School Readiness Coordinators and Family Advocates from five different communities in Marin, funded by First 5 Marin’s School Readiness Initiative, also talked about the value of coming together monthly, describing how they are building relationships with one another, sharing ideas, and learning from one another. Advocates also noted that discussions in the meeting “help clarify the big picture” of the work, they are doing. In addition to highlighting the value of explicit opportunities for communication and networking among themselves, these comments also illustrate ways in which aspects of the working definition of system change are being addressed. These meetings are providing opportunity for the intentional fostering of linkages and relationships. Furthermore, in building these relationships, funded partners are also developing habits of working together to build knowledge and processes across projects (shared principles and norms lever).

In addition to this internal communication and networking, funded partners also described growing awareness among other agencies regarding their work (stakeholder roles lever). As mentioned in focus groups with Advocates:

“When we began, parents were recruited door-to-door. The community and the agencies know more about us... Other organizations acknowledge our program and bring families in. Local organizations are doing the referring to us.”

Furthermore, there is the role of First 5 Marin in fostering relationships and new networks among the broader groups of organizations in Marin. Comments from the focus groups suggest that the reputation of First 5 and its leadership's relationships within Marin have opened doors and facilitated progress towards more effective delivery of services.

"Our relationship with First 5 Marin always makes it easier for us to collaborate with other institutions. First 5 Marin is well known, connected and respected in the community and is supportive of all of our efforts."

Further evidence of the importance of communication to First 5 Marin's system change efforts is seen in its inclusion of a Public Policy and Education Initiative that is specifically designed to support its broader communication efforts. Activities of the Public Policy and Education Initiative include:

- producing monthly legislative reports for the Commission meetings;
- producing and sending letters to federal and state elected officials, copy to our local representatives;
- communicating with Marin's representatives in the State Senate and Assembly regarding legislation, key public policy issues affecting young children, and regarding First 5 events; and
- sending communications to city council members, county supervisors, Assembly members, State Senators, Congressional representatives and US Senators (cc'd to city manager, CAO) regarding First 5 programs/accomplishments

"In developing partnerships and relationships with other agencies, it's not always immediately clear how our programs are relevant to their agencies, so using the Communications Manager and information from the evaluation reports helps make the relevance more evident." (SRI Focus Group)

Shared Principles and Norms

First 5 Marin continues to grow in its articulation and realization of "common norms that are respectful of other ideas rather than confrontational" and shared leadership with "a focus on long-term capacity building rather than short-term crisis interventions, and an expanded view of stakeholders" (Parsons, 1997 p.48). The principles underlying these norms include intentions towards building – and building upon – the interconnectedness of funded and other partners, and developing a sense of shared leadership and responsibility about both process and results. The comments of this stakeholder highlight the broader community's perception of the emergence of these shared underlying principles within First 5 Marin:

I think Amy and the people that work in First 5 are very systems oriented and they see the big picture. So they are not stuck in disparate programs that don't connect in some way. (Stakeholder)

In relation to the underlying principles, focus group participants described how they've established connections between initiatives and with other agencies, noting that there continues to be a need to "get outside of specific programs and services to build" these connections. Focus group comments suggest a sense of shared leadership and responsibility as well as an expanded view of stakeholders among funded partners, with participants in one focus group explaining that there is a need to influence the overall perception of these services, to see them within the larger frame of the well-being of families and not just meeting the needs of children 0-5. Comments about the expanded use and integration of The Ages and Stages Questionnaire

highlight the sense of shared leadership and responsibility across both the SNMH and School Readiness Initiatives in identifying and supporting children with special needs.

In addition, the fostering of relationships described previously also was noted in the SNMH Initiative focus group as supporting the growth of shared leadership by “open(ing) things up for more lead players to be involved.” (SNMH Focus Group). The notion of an expanded view of stakeholders and their role was touched on in the School Readiness focus group where participants mentioned that parents are becoming more involved and vocal as group (Human capacity lever).

Governance and Leadership

In a sustainable community system, governance and leadership are described as encouraging movement from individual to strategically aligned cross-organizational commitments and are “keeping the system responsive to, and in tune with, the needs and vision of the community, rather than micromanagement of the system.” (Parsons, 1997, p. 53). Comments reflecting an alignment with this definition are abundant across data sources. For example, one stakeholder describes his perception of First 5 Marin as well-positioned to encourage cross-organizational commitments “whether they are the ones who sort of called everybody together or whether they’re in a coalition with other people like us,” adding that the clarity of the mission helps First 5 to be successful in driving systems change. Another focus group participant similarly noted, “Leadership has a clear vision to move people in the same direction” (SNMH Focus Group). Also noted in the SNMH focus group:

The leadership of First 5 has helped influence many great connections for children and families in Marin. Continuation in the leadership efforts will help implement long-term strategic change in the Marin community. (SNMH)

The role and use of evaluation is also described in this lever. In moving towards a sustainable community system, “evaluation is done with an emphasis on learning and improvement and using data to make decisions. Evaluations are also focused on looking at benchmarks of progress toward long-term goals and providing information that helps governing bodies recognize adjustments they need to make within and across systems to achieve their ultimate goals” (Parsons, 1997, p. 53). Comments at both the School Readiness and SNMH Initiative focus groups suggest that evaluation is already being viewed as “contributing to learning and program improvement.” Another focus group participant recognized this approach in the way in which learning from a less successful effort was used to come up with alternative strategies.

Foundational Elements

Foundational aspects underlie and operate across the levers. Important foundational elements frequently described as supporting movement along the continuum of change include: 1) trust; 2) history; 3) willingness; and 4) size and scale of Marin.

Trust

The work of building trusting relationships emerges as a major foundational element. A comment that emerged from one of the focus groups remarks on the need to engage people from the community in order “to maintain trust and support for shared vision and principles.” In addition, the importance of trust with families is described as impacting effectiveness and outreach in a year-end report:

Build trusting relationships: families know they can trust us and so they send their friends and relatives to our program. We are the ones they know they can call for help and guidance. If we don’t

know the answer, we'll find it. Trusting relationships have enabled us to take advantage of the most effective way to reach our families – word of mouth. (SRI)

From the perspective of organizations working together, this stakeholder described the primacy of trusting relationships:

Some of it's just building relationships over time. It's building trust. I imagine that in the most successful communities, either through leadership or through multiple people insisting on "We're gonna make this work." And, you just hang in there, and you're with each other enough to have trusting relationships. (Stakeholder)

Another stakeholder talked about challenges that can be associated with who gets credit for the outcomes of collaborative efforts:

Bigger systems change is done on behalf of the children and families we're trying to serve – and nobody needs to get credit for it. But I think that in some ways, everybody is hungry for credit – how do we get acknowledged, how do we continue to justify our existence and that kind of thing. It's just the nature of organizations and institutions to want some of that, and we haven't set it aside yet, I think. (Stakeholder)

History

To a certain extent the work of First 5 to foster connections and collaborations is supported by existing relationships within Marin. Focus group participants pointed out how these relationships benefit in opening doors to working with funded and other community partners.

First 5 Marin has provided a critical link in the development of community partnership among private and public organizations working for special needs children. Easter Seals has built a strong working relationship with the Marin Community Clinics and we are developing a new partnership with Kaiser. As a result, our goal of providing developmental screening to all young children in Marin is now realistic and achievable. (SNMH)

Willingness

First 5's leadership role reflects their willingness to assist in exploring and building cross-agency partnerships and programs.

I think, as far as what's been effective, First 5 has done a good job of linking programs together through the projects that they have developed. (Stakeholder)

The work of First 5 Marin has resulted in new groups that meet regularly to discuss and strategize together to move efforts to a broader outcome. One of these groups formed to discuss quality in childcare and the other was formed out of lack of services for those children who are experiencing significant social/emotional behavior. The Child Care Commission has brought the work of these groups forth in the master planning that is taking place. (SNMH)

Size and scale of Marin

Stakeholders and funded partners reflected on the idea that given geographic and population sizes, system change should be feasible in Marin.

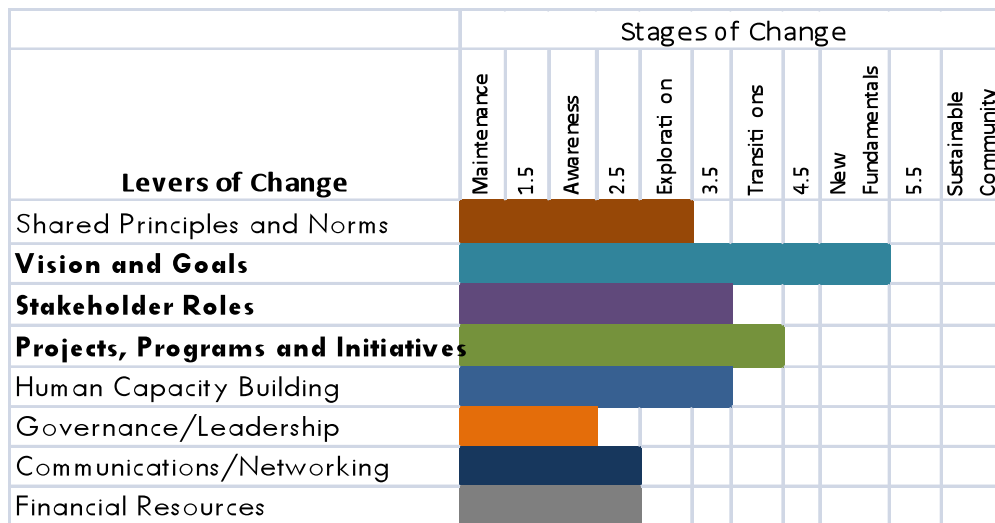
One of the things that I think is very clear, and I'm sure Amy knows this, is that in a county like Marin that's relatively wealthy and has a population that you can get your head around – it's not L.A. – that we ought to be able to make things better for all of our children. (Stakeholder)

In What Ways Has First 5 Marin Made the Most Significant Contributions?

First 5 Marin is committed to working with funded partners and other community partners to develop sustainable strategies resulting in a system of care for Marin County that is better coordinated, collaborative and integrated. The Strategic Plan, adopted in 2004, is the core of their efforts. Although context, resources and occasionally players have changed over time, the vision and goals of the Commission remain constant. This holds true for many of the programs, projects and initiatives funded through First 5 Marin as well. Many stakeholders remarked that this consistency over time has supported deeper understanding and communication of roles. Figure 6 is a graphical application of the SCSC framework to the work of First 5 Marin.

I think the focus of visioning and goals and kind of results orientation has been strong. I think it's helped programs think in those terms (Stakeholders)

Figure 6: Application of the SCSC to First 5 Marin's Efforts



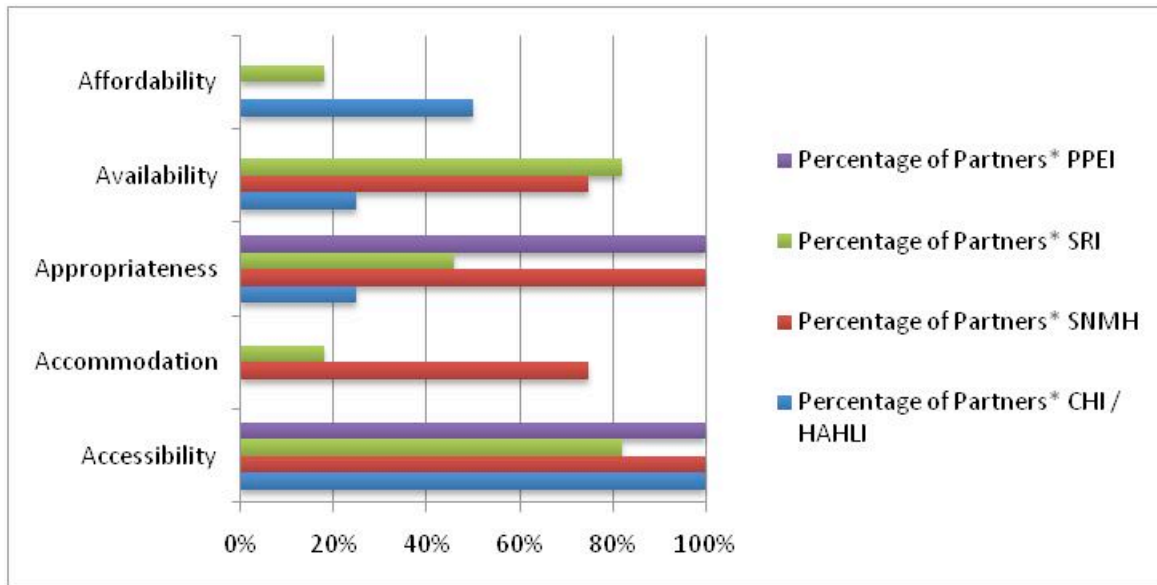
Strategies employed by First 5 Marin seek to influence different key aspects of system change, including internal efforts more directly related to program operations and relationships with other agencies/ organizations, as well as external efforts seeking to influence policy, promote community involvement and change the public discourse on issues. The impacts of these strategies as well as evidence of the strategies themselves are described throughout the year-end reports provided by First 5 Marin's funded partners, highlighting the institutionalization of approaches to integrated services and supports and increased accessibility.

5A’s Across First 5 Marin Initiatives

Though not directly prompted to address aspects of First 5 Marin’s Guiding Principles and the Five A’s of Access, while discussing their successes, challenges and project highlights, funded projects provided numerous examples of the ways in which their work is addressing and is aligned with First 5 principles and key factors for sustainable system change.

Figure 7 reflects the percentage of coded funded-partner year-end reports within each initiative wherein there is spontaneous mention of ways their work is addressing the particular strategies/principles identified as supporting system change. Year-end reports did not formally solicit information about these specific strategies/principles.

Figure7: Percentage of Funded Partners Year-End Reports Addressing 5A’s of Access



In the following section the ways in which each of the Five A’s was observed, addressed, and/or aligned with is summarized and accompanied by select highlights from project narratives with further detail.

Accessibility: Convenient and user-friendly service delivery for clients, including improved informal and formal referral relationships

Partners routinely discuss various ways in which they were mindful of operating in ways that were convenient and user-friendly. Consistent scheduling and follow-through with each client, centralizing and de-centralizing service locations as appropriate, and increasing access through the on-site availability of resources from collaborating projects. Additionally, program components such as school readiness playgroups are repeatedly described as providing a convenient means for sharing information and resources with clients in a friendly, trusting atmosphere. Reports highlighted the importance of formal and informal referral relationships by describing the progress of particular clients who followed through on referrals, increased understanding and referrals from community partners, and increased inquiries from those who heard about services from participants.

Several parents have followed-up on FLAGship referrals and connected with Marin Literacy Program to receive literacy instruction. Eight women stand out in my mind who have gone on to receive tutoring and greatly improved their literacy skills in a short time. Two are from Novato, five from West Marin, and one from San Rafael. Each started attending FLAGship for the benefit of their preschool-aged children and then chose to take steps toward improving their own lives and, subsequently, that of their families. These happy parents share their experiences and successes with other adults who could potentially benefit from our literacy services, "spreading the good word," you might say! (SRI)

One benefit not anticipated is how much the information the mentors shared was spread out among the general family childcare population and then having those providers call and want the information given to mentees. (CHI/HAHLI)

Relationship with the Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health – has strengthened because of the nutrition trainings, HAHLI meetings, and their involvement with providing oral health exams at Summer Bridge, to Kindergartners during the school year and at International Canal Health and Safety Day. (SRI)

When we began, parents were recruited door-to-door. The community and the agencies know more about us, which makes it easier to bring parents in. Other organizations acknowledge our program and bring families in. Local organizations are doing the referring to us. (Advocates Focus Group)

Accommodation: Modifying operational practices to increase access to services

Projects described modifications to their operational practices resulting in increased access to services. Some of these modifications included targeted outreach into isolated areas including the continuation of FLAGship's mobile family literacy services. Additionally, School Readiness playgroups continue to adjust the days and/or hours for playgroups to encourage parent participation, noting that participation in these playgroups is often a comfortable first step for parents that allow them to obtain information about and/or referrals for other services that benefit the well-being of their family.

As anticipated, we are reaching out to physically isolated or emotionally withdrawn family units that have not previously had community contact or support. We are seeing the formation of new "mom's groups" in the Valley who met solely through the Valley playgroup. (SRI)

This "preschool-on-wheels" is a mobile family literacy project that provides a multitude of services to connect families with their communities. We search out groups of underserved families across Marin, the most recent addition being Bolinas. As stated in our Scope of Work, we have served many diverse groups such as isolated West Marin ranch families, inner-city Canal families, and home daycares in Novato. New site possibilities pop up often, causing the FLAGship schedule to shift and morph every year. Some sites have remained the same from the beginning, while others change often with the shifting needs and populations that exist in Marin County. (SRI/HAHLI)

Instead of relying on word of mouth and referrals, our Parent Advisor will increase her presence in the Canal and will go out into existing gatherings of parents. (SRI)

Appropriateness: Working with diverse populations

As with the ways in which partners are applying their knowledge and understanding of their clients and communities to increase convenience and availability of services, this knowledge and understanding is also applied in consideration of how best to operate and provide services in ways that are appropriate for the diverse populations with which they work. Partners from each initiative described staffing and program decisions that reflected appropriateness to client needs and primary languages, including refining approaches to sharing information with clients and working to build trust in conjunction with their understanding of how to better work within their diverse communities.

Each community has its own way of working so helping bridge the work of the project to the broader community continues to be a target... that realignment and updating of the objectives in relationship to the broader community has contributed greatly to the success of the program. Another activity is the Special Needs project's ability to change their practices in order to meet the target collaborator's way of working as seen in the most recent work with the West Marin Community. (SNMH)

The multi-cultural staff members who have brought invaluable languages and skills to the CHI program significantly influenced achievement of the performance targets. As a group, they have the English, Spanish, Vietnamese, French and Portuguese languages available to assist clients. Each has come to the job with local community contacts and a great many CHI clients know all. Their education, professionalism and program skills have been essential to the work that they have assumed. (CHI/HAHLI)

In addition to funded partners' comments, one stakeholder also described his awareness of First 5 Marin hiring people from the community to become part of their organization, noting that this fosters "real community engagement going on and community capacity building going on through the work."

Availability: Increasing number and types of services

Partners describe some of the ways in which they expanded the number and/or types of services for their communities. For some, this increase was possible in part with additional staff and/or coordinating projects with other First 5 Marin community partners, including accessing funding and support available through First 5's Marin's Health Advocacy & Health Literacy Initiative. Partners also detailed the importance of building and maintaining relationships and communicating the work of their projects to expanding/deepening engagement and leveraging resources with these with whom they collaborate to

We were able to significantly increase our workshop offerings because of funding from the Health Advocacy / Health Literacy Initiative (HAHLI). HAHLI's coordinator generously provided free facilitation of the Basic Aide workshops to parents and Promotores. Our program took full advantage of the funding & Barbara's services and our families benefited. We significantly increased the number

of workshops that we offered families this year. We offered 22 education workshops plus 3 Promotores workshops. Last year we offered 6 workshops. (SRI)

One goal this past year was to introduce more health events to the First 5 community and we accomplished this goal with our four Health Days, parent education nights, immunization clinics, family cooking nights, and CPR and First Aid classes. Many of these events were in collaboration with the HAHLI grant and will continue next year. (SRI)

The work of the initiative will be strengthened as the project collaborators work to broaden their collective perspectives. As the lead coordinator for the project, Easter Seals will work to help collaborative partners link to the broader goal of the Initiative's work rather than stay focused on their piece of the work (SNMH)

We have begun to discuss with SLS supervisor Dani Tarry, Superintendent Stephen Rosenthal, Principal Anne Harris and Head Start E.D. Kay Wernert, the possibility of working collaboratively to open a unique Head Start/Family Center at West Marin School. It has become evident to many leaders in our community that our current preschool does not have the capacity to serve all our families. We currently have over 35 families waiting for Head Start services in West Marin. We understand that the central eligibility list in Marin is much, much larger, but we feel that we can develop the infrastructure to serve all of our families here in our community. (SRI)

Affordability: Barriers to access due to cost are reduced

Some of the more specific ways in which affordability was addressed in 2007-2008 included the continued support for enrollment in children's health insurance, as well as the provision of stipends and transportation reimbursements for training participants. An example of the longer-term impacts of these stipends is described as follows:

Teachers and Family Child Care providers in Marin County are becoming more educated as they complete college coursework towards their permits and degrees. Almost half of the returning stipend recipients completed more than the three or six units required for a CARES stipend. Two stipend recipients received their Associate degrees, one received her Bachelor's degree – , and they plan to continue with furthering their education. (SRI)

Other Levers of Change

In addition to the "Key Levers of Change" described in the previous section and the 5A's of Access, often the work of First 5 Marin relates to two other important levers: Human Capacity Building and Financial Resources.

Human Capacity Building

Through its staff, consultants and other supports, First 5 Marin has made considerable efforts supporting Human Capacity Building among its funded partners and beyond. For example, First 5 has collaborated with the American Association of Pediatrics and Easter Seals to offer a daylong training conference in the use of screening tools to identify infants and young children with developmental delays or disorders, understanding and screening for autism, and developmental

challenges faced by premature infants. Information about community resources, agencies and other intervention or support services for children in need of follow-up was also reviewed. As a result, a number of private pediatric practices in Marin are using Ages and Stages (an evidenced-based screening tool) as part of their well-child care.

In a related scenario, Easter Seals and the Marin Child Care Council provided training for daycare providers to support and retain special needs children in their daycare settings. By reaching out to early care educators, more pre-schools are accepting special needs children and providers are calling Easter Seals for assistance and support rather than removing children from childcare.

In addition to more formal professional development, First 5 Marin supported convenings among their funded partners, including initiative roundtables and meetings with First 5 leadership and initiative leads. As discussed elsewhere in this report, funded partners talked quite a bit about the benefits and importance of their initiative meetings in focus groups and year-end reports; furthermore, the comment below helps to illustrate how the meetings among initiative leads supports structures and partnerships integral to long-term success:

As the initiatives continue to work together under the guidance of the executive director, we should improve cooperative efforts among the initiatives (how can HAHLI help SRI, and vice versa. How can SRI help Special Needs), be willing to ask other initiative leads for ideas and support (initiative leads can ask for public information and outreach support from the Public Policy Initiative), and look for opportunities to expand the role of the executive director in relation to the initiatives (how can her community contacts and networks further support initiative efforts). (PPEI)

Financial Resources

Stakeholders and focus group participants frequently mentioned the notion of *funding silos* and the challenges that specified funds to individual projects and organizations presents in deepening partnerships and collaborations.

By targeting funds directly to support partnerships, First 5 Marin displays an intention towards system change in its allocation of financial resources. Many examples of this, as reported by funded partners, relate to the increased services and emerging/strengthening partnerships that grow from Health Advocacy/Health Literacy Initiative (HAHLI) funds. HAHLI funding supports integration and coordination among organizations, programs, and systems around health messages, understanding of health services and how and why to use them, and reducing barriers to access for families by focusing on building the School Readiness Initiative's ability to promote health in their communities. School Readiness Initiative Coordinators, community advocates, and stakeholders met quarterly in 2007-2008 and discussed community health needs, support and barriers to promoting health, and resources needed. The initiative supported human capacity building by engaging community advocates in local training opportunities such as the Provider Summit and Nutrition Forum. HAHLI funds also support the monthly meeting that brings together School Readiness Family and Health Advocates.

In FY2007-2008, First 5 Marin distributed \$2,498, 569 to its initiatives and programs, which support its Strategic Plan.³ These funded partners were able to leverage close to \$2,000,000.00 additional funding to support programs and efforts, essentially doubling First 5 Marin's investment. This number is a conservative estimate given the difficulty determining the specific dollar amounts that both First 5 Marin and the County Department of Health and Human Services are able to draw down from the Medi-Cal Administrative Activities Program (MAA). This additional funding has provided for program expansions as well as organizational capacity building and sustainability.

Figure 7: Leveraged Funding Table

FY0708 Other Program Revenues & In-Kind Sources		
	Revenue	In-Kind
Canal Neighborhood School Readiness		
State Match	186,369.00	
Bahia Vista Even Start		
San Rafael City School District	57,310.00	97,030.32
Federal Even Start Grant	120,750.00	
Parent Ed. Collaboration		105,116.18
Marin Community Foundation	20,000.00	
Parent to Parent/Matrix Parent Network		
Matrix Parent Network		4,188.00
Mentores/Parent Services Project		
Bella Vista Foundation	25,115.00	
Marin Head Start/Family Ed. Coordinator		
San Rafael School District		6,000.00
Marin Head Start/CAM		8,096.00
CSR/Pickleweed CC Preschool		
City of San Rafael		10,410.00
School Readiness Expansion Projects		
Shoreline/Papermill Creek C.C.		
Shoreline Community Agency		38,860.00
United Way Bay Area	62,757.00	4,500.00
San Geronimo Valley /San Geronimo V.C.C		
San Geronimo Valley Community Donors		28,285.20
Grants from other Sources		1,000.00
In-kind services from other sources		1,000.00

³ First 5 Marin 2007-2008 Annual Report to the Community

FY0708 Other Program Revenues & In-Kind Sources (continued)		
	Revenue	In-Kind
MarinCARES		
State Match	127,183.00	
Marin Community Match		80,000.00
Marin County Board of Supervisors	50,000.00	
Marin Community Foundation	30,000.00	
Morris Family Foundation	25,000.00	
AB212	70,000.00	
Medical Legal Partnership Emerging Opportunity		
County of Marin	2,500.00	48,500.00
Prospective Funders (not specifically allocated)	117,531.00	
MCC Med		
Children's Health Initiative		
MC/DHHS/Children's Oral Health Project		
Insurance Reimbursements	16,593.00	
Federal Financial Participation	35,530.00	
Marin County General Fund	-	37,431.00
Dental Specialty Grant	7,788.00	
CHI/Community Outreach Workers		
MAA (0405, 0506)	54,698.00	
United Way	15,000.00	
State CAA Reimbursement	13,330.00	

FY0708 Other Program Revenues & In-Kind Sources (continued)		
	Revenue	In-Kind
Health Advocacy/Health Literacy Initiative		
Health Advocacy/Health Literacy		
MAA (0405, 0506)	89,185.00	
Marin Literacy/FLAGShip		
Marin Literacy		8,510.00
Sonoma First 5	10,250.00	
Mill Valley Outdoor	800.00	
Early Childhood Health Consultant/MC - DHHS		
Federal Financial Participation	9,966.00	
Title V	44,604.00	
Special Needs/Mental Health Initiative		
Family Service Agency of Marin		
MediCal	48,464.00	
Contributions/foundation grants	24,025.00	14,365.00
Self-pay	9,320.00	
Victims of Crime	2,430	
CPS	550	
Jewish Children's & Family Services		
Marin Community Foundation	50,000.00	
Morris Family Foundation	20,000.00	
Stulsaft Foundation (requested)	10,000.00	
Bella Vista	35,000.00	
JFCS	57,493.00	
TOTAL	1,449,541.00	493,291.70

Highlights of Sustainable System Change⁴

As well as being a funder, First 5 Marin has played a significant role, often as the initiator and convener, resulting in significant changes in access to supports and services in Marin. These successes cross disciplines, engaging small and large organizations in new ways of thinking and doing their work in order to create an integrated and sustainable system, which is better able to meet the needs and support the efforts of those it serves. Following are highlights:

THE MARIN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The Marin Early Childhood Education Partnership includes the Marin County Superintendent of Schools and the leaders of the Marin Child Care Commission, the Marin Child Care Council and First 5 Marin. Meeting monthly since 2006, this is the only regular convening of the leadership of these key institutions representing the pre-K-12 educational pipeline. In addition to deepening the understanding of each other's organizations, including differing and common priorities, tensions and challenges, the Partnership members work together to develop solutions. One such example was the shared concern about the current and future need for preschool staffs—especially those with advanced education or targeted training. The solution: the Marin County Office of Education began to offer an early childhood education course as part of its Regional Occupation Program (ROP). High school ROP students now get high school credit for learning about career opportunities as early childhood educators. They gain exposure to the field of preschool education, learn how advancing their own education will support their career goals—and credits earned are accepted by the College of Marin should they continue their education in the early care field.

RESULTS: During FY 2007-08, there were 70 high school students enrolled in the new ROP classes for early childhood education.

PEDIATRIC TRAINING CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

First 5 Marin collaborated with the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) and Easter Seals on a training conference for pediatricians. Upon completion, physicians received five hours of Continuing Medical Education and nurses qualified for five contact hours. This daylong event offered presentations by developmental experts and medical professionals in the use of screening tools to identify infants and young children with developmental delays or disorders, understanding and screening for autism, and the developmental challenges often faced by premature infants. The conference also reviewed community resources, agencies and specialists providing counseling, therapy and other interventions and support services for those children in need of follow-up.

RESULTS: 40 pediatricians, nurses and other health professionals attended this conference on April 12, 2008. Evaluations were almost entirely "excellent" or "very good" for all segments of the conference. In addition, several private pediatric practices have begun using Ages and Stages (ASQ) and MCHAT(an evidence-based autism screen as part of their regular well-child services. There has been discussion about having a second training in FY2009-2010.

⁴ FY2007-2008 First 5 Marin Report to the Community

SPECIAL NEEDS/MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE: DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING AND EARLY INTERVENTION

This Initiative is dedicated to universal developmental screening and early intervention for children with special needs and mental health or emotional issues. The Initiative has developed a dynamic countywide partnership and three key components: developmental screening and assessment; a roundtable of service providers working as an interdisciplinary team; and a referral network to provide prompt and appropriate follow-up. Easter Seals of Northern California is coordinating the universal screening effort. With administrative and follow-up support from Easter Seals (funded by First 5), Marin Community Clinics provides universal screening of all of their pediatric patients beginning at six months of age. Extended partnerships ensure that those children who are “yellow-flagged or red-flagged” receive appropriate follow-up services: the Family Service Agency of Marin provides parent and child counseling; Jewish Family and Children’s Services leads the Early Childhood Mental Health Project and offers support to families and staff when children have behavioral difficulties in early care settings. Working together, Easter Seals and the Marin Child Care Council provide training for family daycare providers to support and retain special needs children in their daycare settings. All of the partners in the initiative collaborate with First 5 Marin’s five school readiness sites, community-based organizations, public agencies, other healthcare providers, childcare providers, preschools, teachers and families to support children.

RESULTS: In FY2007-2008, of the 1900 “Ages and Stages” questionnaires distributed, 928 were returned for review. After scoring and assessment, hundreds of children with special needs, mental health or behavioral issues were identified early on and received services to address physical, social or emotional challenges. 80% of children receiving Parent-Child Interactive Therapy stabilized or improved in all rated categories; and 80% of participating families had improved scores. The Marin Community Clinics adopted a new policy of screening all children for autism at 18 months. In addition, by outreaching to early care educators, Easter Seals has seen far more preschools accepting special needs children, and providers are calling for assistance and support rather than immediately removing children from daycare due to behavioral problems.

ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIP WITH MARIN COUNTY DENTAL CLINIC AND MARIN COMMUNITY CLINICS

One of First 5 Marin’s earlier projects was the Oral Health Program (now an initiative). Through this project, oral health treatment for hundreds of low-income children each year was provided for many children who received treatment for the first time. By communicating about the crisis in children’s dental health and contributing to media coverage and public policy attention, First 5 joined healthcare professionals and health advocates in underscoring the need to increase the capacity for additional pediatric dental care in Marin County.

RESULTS: As a result of this broad advocacy for children’s oral healthcare in the County, The Board of Supervisors agreed to funding additional dental health capacity at the Marin County Dental Clinic, particularly for pregnant women, Then, in 2008, the Marin Community Clinics opened a new campus in San Rafael and included six dental chairs for children., it has also instituted a policy that all children will see a dentist twice a year beginning at six months of age.

CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

This initiative brings oral healthcare and education to young children in preschool, childcare and family daycare settings, and Summer Bridge classes. Most of these children are low-income, and many have never seen a dentist before. Staff provides oral health screenings, dental cleanings, and fluoride varnish and x-rays if needed. They also make referrals for follow-up dental services; provide dental care for pregnant women and new mothers; and support “mid-day teeth brushing programs” at preschools and childcare centers.

RESULTS: During FY2007-2008, 713 children received comprehensive oral health screenings, dental care and education; 487 children participated in mid-day brushing programs; and 73 pregnant women and new mothers received oral healthcare and treatment through collaboration with the County's Women's Health Clinic.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INITIATIVE (CHI): HEALTHCARE OUTREACH, ENROLLMENT AND RENEWAL ASSISTANCE

As a primary partner in Marin County's Children's Health Initiative (CHI), First 5 Marin funds the countywide efforts for outreach, enrollment, renewal and utilization of healthcare coverage. CHI is dedicated to enrolling every uninsured child in a health insurance product. If they qualify for public programs, staff provides assistance with the applications. For those children ages 0 to 5 who do not qualify, First 5 Marin pays the insurance premiums. Once children are insured, the goal is to make sure that they stay insured, that the family establishes a “medical home” with a primary care physician and that the insurance is properly utilized to obtain all recommended immunizations, for scheduled well-baby visits, and specialty and urgent care as needed. The Children's Health Initiative is a collaboration of many key partners: Marin County, Healthy Marin Partnership, Marin Community Clinics, the Marin Community Foundation and First 5 Marin. In order to reach out to families and children who may be uninsured, CHI also works with elementary schools, community-based organizations, Summer Bridge and other school readiness programs, FLAGship and other families in the local community.

RESULTS: During FY 2007-08, 2733 children received healthcare application, enrollment or renewal assistance. In total, 40,000 referral forms were distributed. Outreach workers enrolled 199 new children in CalKids also had a 98% retention rate. 1200 children already or newly enrolled in CalKids received case management supports from the county's Department of Health and Human Services through funding from First 5 Marin.

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL INFORMATION SERVICES (CSIS) ID ASSIGNMENTS – LONGITUDINAL TRACKING

After several years of discussing the possibility of longitudinal evaluation and tracking children who have been part of First 5 Marin, October 2008 presented a new opportunity. Earlier that year, the Marin County Superintendent of Education who sits on the Early Childhood Education Partnership, was successful in getting all 19 school districts in Marin to adopt a single data system. This created a technological environment supportive of longitudinal tracking. With this in place, steps were identified, building on the partnerships between First 5 Marin, Head Start, Even Start, MCOE and others, to make this a reality. There is now agreement that the CSIS IDs traditionally assigned at kindergarten entry should be assigned in Pre-K. The San Rafael School District has agreed to serve as the pilot for this project sometime in 2009. Efforts are underway to standardize forms across the various pre-K providers. Parents will be able to indicate the type of pre-K experience in which their children participated prior to entering the K-12 system.

RESULTS: First 5 Marin, Head Start, Even Start and others who provide pre-K opportunities to children will be able to better determine the impact of their efforts by following the progress of these children as they enter the K-12 system. This will provide important data as strategies continue to evolve about how best to support the school readiness of children and the impact of those efforts long-term.

At What Stage is Marin along the Continuum of Change?⁵

Observations about the stage of the county of Marin along the continuum are presented as context for First 5 Marin's efforts and informational for stakeholders working across all systems in the county. Several factors suggest that it is an opportune time to better understand, define and commit to a more clearly articulated vision of a system of services and supports countywide. These factors include shifting and diversifying demographics; the changing public, social and philanthropic environment; and economic conditions that have, and will likely continue for some years, resulted in increasing demand for services and supports across disciplines.

Although a small Study Group, the diversity of the participants in terms of their roles and tenure in key sub systems across the county provides, we believe, a reliable and valid lens for assessing the current stage of system change in Marin using the SCSC framework. Representatives of other systems (i.e., juvenile justice, business community, etc.) should be exposed to the framework to both further refine and to engage in the work. As a first step, First 5 Marin intends to share this report with its "Shared Vision for Marin's Kids" Committee, which has broader representation, to inform the Commission's planning.

Using the SCSC as reference, Stakeholders interviewed noted both progress made and opportunities on certain levers. Notable changes within the broader countywide system across all subsystems (bureaucratic, professional and community) were apparent in three areas: 1) a greater sense of clarity and understanding of organizational goals and roles; 2) increased communication among stakeholders; and 3) most notably, an improved willingness to explore collaboration.

⁵ Parsons, Beverly "Using a Systems Change Framework to Build Communities," *InSites*, Boulder CO, 1997

A recent example that highlights progress made was mentioned by several individuals is the Shared Vision Committee. The Committee was initiated by First 5 Marin as part of its Public Education and Policy Initiative but is much broader than First 5 Marin and children 0-5. This is seen as an important collaboration and venue for tipping a few of the Levers of Change to move the system closer to ones that are more adaptive.

Our CEO sits on that group (e.g., Shared Vision Committee). It might have been logical to send me, but no, she said, this is important enough that I want to be there. It is in the early stages, but with the quality of conversation that I hope they are having, that is always a good sign. (Stakeholder)

Another longstanding effort is the collaboration between First 5 Marin, Marin Community Foundation and the County of Marin's Department of Health and Human Services to fund the Children's Health Initiative (CHI), which they have done for the past 5 years. The oversight body for CHI is the Children's Health Initiative Coordinating Committee, officially appointed by the Board of Supervisors with representation from the County of Marin, First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission, Marin Community Foundation, Healthy Marin Partnership, the Latino Council, Coastal Health Alliance, the Marin Community Clinic and the Marin County Office of Education.

It was a process that created a new level of trust among those three entities (i.e., First 5 Marin, Marin Community Foundation and Marin Department of Health and Human Services) and a new way of working. It was a model for how to make systems change, because we did change the system through that process and created networks, collaborations and partnerships that did not exist before. If it can be done in children's health insurance, which is one of the more complicated things in the world, then it certainly can be done with a lot of others. (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders noted continued progress along three levers, Shared Principles and Norms, Governance and Leadership and Financial Resources would support overall movement towards *Sustainable Community System Change*. They remarked that although there were more examples of diversity and inclusiveness on advisory and coordinating councils at the program level, this norm had not been fully embraced county-wide and at all levels of policy and decision-making. One individual characterized as follows:

But the whole notion of inclusive governance and client voice on some of those things – I'd like to see us get there, but I think we're on the pre-awareness stage of that in this county. (Stakeholder)

Collaborative funding has increased in Marin. It tends to be co-funding as illustrated by the success of the Children's Health Initiative. At the organizational and program level, in terms of pooling resources it remains a tension.

I think people are still very hesitant to get into shared funding situations if it may mean less for the exact work that they want to do. We really want people to be changing how they are doing their own business in relationship to other opportunities and kind of linking the funding. (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders identified specific areas of opportunity that build on the foundation to date and increase movement along the system change continuum such as establishing a common language, adapting best

practices and approaches, moving commitment from the individual to the organization level and expanding community participation.

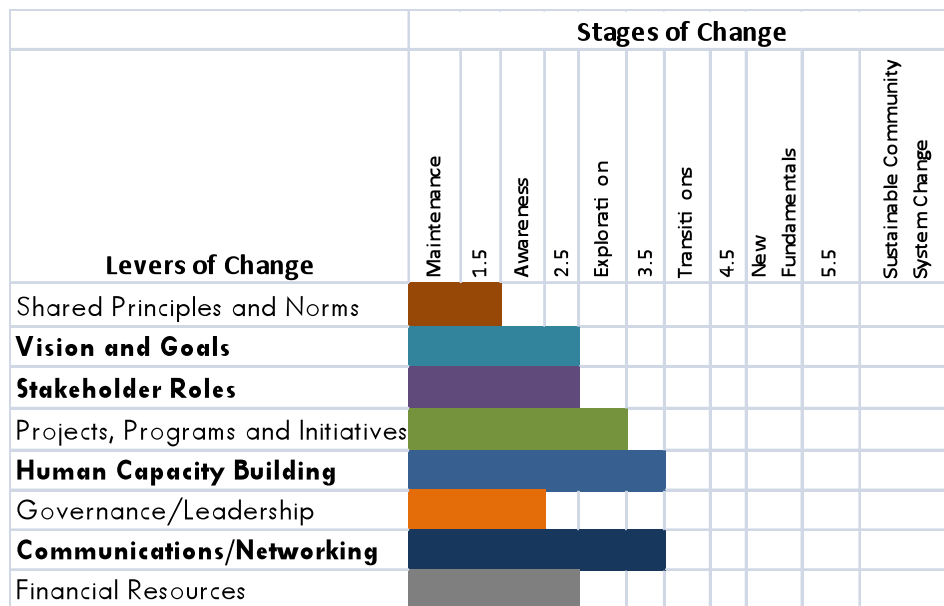
I think in order to have a shared vision and actually have a shared system that we need to come up with some shared language. (Stakeholder)

Perhaps the most important next step is to generate countywide commitment to *Sustainable Community System Change*, to make the development and maintenance of a system that is adaptive, community based and sustainable a shared principle and norm. One stakeholder summed it up as

“How do you convince leadership and boards that there is a result in doing this “system change” work?

The combination of progress and opportunities provide insight into the status of the county, presented on the following page using the *Sustainable Community System Change* framework. This assessment is informational only and is context for both First 5 Marin and others interested in applying a system perspective to Marin.

Figure 8: Application of the SCSC to the County of Marin



And that’s the next step, I would think, for the leadership, the County, the First 5 and the Foundation – to really move forward together and create a system together. (Stakeholder)

VALIDITY OF THE FRAMEWORK

The exploration and testing of the *Sustainable Community System Change* Framework was well received by all who engaged in this process. Participants expressed their appreciation of a more explicit approach to system change grounded in a clear definition, which acknowledged the importance of both the process of system change and the adaptive system resulting from the effort (the outcome).

Several participants remarked that the focus on system change was a role they had come to expect of First 5 Marin.

I think that they ought to be thinking of themselves in a systems change role, not just we're a funder and not just a supporter of services role. (Stakeholder)

Focus Group and Interview participants were generally accepting and engaged by the SCSC framework. One stakeholder commented: "Looks to me like you have the right things on this graphic." Not surprisingly, elements resonated differently across the Study Group. These differences across groups and individuals were likely due to the developmental stage of their programs/initiatives/organizations, their own role and perhaps to their individual characteristics.

First 5 Marin Commissioners although not formally interviewed as part of this process, were presented the working SCSC framework in November 2008. They reflect a wide range of experiences and perspectives as well as positions in Marin. In general, it resonated strongly with the Commissioners. Further refinement of the SCSC will occur as part of the Strategic Planning process.

The SCSC proved to be a relevant and meaningful tool for assessing the work of First 5 to date with regard to system change.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report explored the application of a developmental system change model that identified elements which, when operationalized, impact movement along the continuum towards a community-based and adaptive system of services and supports. Testing the model included its application to existing data as well as compiling and analyzing the ideas and assessments offered by key stakeholders in the First 5 Marin "family" and the county at large

Conclusions

Overall, the findings are supportive of the *Sustainable Community System Change* framework including the working definition. Study Group participants who were diverse in their experience and roles found it to be relevant to their work with First 5 Marin, as did those who worked in other systems. A depth of evidence that spanned programs creating a picture of system change at the program and organizational levels was apparent when the SCSC was applied. With regard to the status of system change in Marin, findings strongly suggested that there had been progress and that action upon specific areas of focus (levers of change) could continue to

move First 5 Marin and the county of Marin along the continuum to a more community-based and adaptive system.

Highlights of findings for First 5 Marin and the county include:

- There is interest in exploring and working towards SCSC in Marin although there is varying levels of understanding of how to contribute to the work
- Progress has been made in addressing many of the levers of change in SCSC in First 5 Marin and through the county at large
- Many look to First 5 Marin as the “holder” of a system change vision and commitment
- Several efforts initiated and/or sponsored by First 5 Marin resulted in significant changes to the systems affecting access to services and support to children 0-5
- The various roles which First 5 Marin plays in the County have nurtured a new environment for collaboration and integration across systems

Recommendations

To build on the accomplishments to date and the interest sparked from this research, the following recommendations are offered for consideration for First 5 Marin:

- ✓ Formally adopt the SCSC as an outcome and a specific strategy in its next strategic plan
- ✓ Develop specific strategies to tip SCSC Levers of Change identified through this work
- ✓ Identify and develop specific evaluation measures to understand and document movement along the continuum and the influence of specific levers of change
- ✓ Update current program and initiative scopes of work and reporting tools to reflect SCSC elements
- ✓ Continue the work with the Shared Vision Committee and ground its next steps in the SCSC