



Marin Children and Families Commission
Meeting Minutes – December 9, 2011
Strategic Planning Retreat

I. CALL TO ORDER

Aideen Gaidmore called the meeting to order at First 5 Marin at 8:43 a.m.

Commissioners Present

Regina Archer
David Bonfilio
Aideen Gaidmore
Sister Joan Hanna
Heather Ravani
Sparkie Spaeth
Alicia Suski

Commissioners Excused

Cio Hernández
Steve Kinsey

Staff Present

Amy L. Reisch
Patricia Brady
Barbara Clifton Zarate
Michelle Fadelli

Representatives from the Community

Jill Casey, jdcPartnerships
Kathy Tabor, Tabor Consulting
Ruthie Ament, Novato School Readiness
Elena Cantor, Novato School Readiness
Dave Cort, San Geronimo Valley Community Center
Dave Haskell, Healthier Children Marin
Karen Maloney, Novato Unified School District
Heather Richardson, Valley School Readiness
Suzanne Sadowsky, Valley School Readiness

II. MEETING MINUTES

Aideen asked if there were changes, additions or corrections to the November 9, 2011 Commission minutes. No changes were announced.

Motion: Suski/Archer

The minutes of November 9, 2011 were approved.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Amy asked about the possibility of changing commission meetings from the first Wednesday of the month to the second. Several commissioners noted standing conflicts. Amy inquired about the third Wednesday of the month, to which there was no opposition. It was proposed that meetings would be changed beginning the month of February. (For January, the commission will skip the January 7th meeting and will meet only for the second Strategic Planning Retreat on Saturday, January 21st from 9 am to 1 pm.)

IV. COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Kathy Tabor from Tabor Consulting welcomed commissioners, staff and guests and moderated the strategic planning session

(See Attached Retreat Record for the full summary of the meeting)

V. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

VI. NEXT MEETING

Retreat: Strategic Planning Retreat Part 2
Saturday, January 21, 2011 – 9 am to 1 pm
Location TBD

**FIRST 5 MARIN
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION
STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT
RETEAT RECORD
December 9, 2011**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Ground Rules

Commissioners suggested the following ground rules for the session: everyone participates and is heard, be thoughtful and courageous, listen and learn, respect new ideas and opinions, speak with children's voices.

B. Hopes for Planning Process

- Develop clear message to the community about what we plan to do so they can plan as well
- Build on our legacy – how can we best do this in the current climate and with diminishing resources
- Use our guiding vision developed in the last cycle of planning – ways to stay the course
- Be realistic related to our priorities; understand that not all programs, strategies, initiatives will go forward or in the same way
- Find ways to align with our community partners
- Be open to moving differently; willing to give up some to achieve other priorities
- Find ways to assist our programs to sustain or translate work into long term gains for community/participants

II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Of What Are We Most Proud?

- Convened the community to engage in priority setting and designing initiatives.
- Created a culture shift toward partnership and collaboration as the norm among people and organizations working for children.
- Convened community leaders to join forces to promote children's issues, policies and in community planning, e.g., MarinKids
- Developed systematic approaches in partnership with other stakeholders (ways of working together to support work in communities.
- Inclusive discussions became the standard around approaches to addressing issues.
- Early recognition of the value of local data and information for assessing progress.
- Developed some model programs with demonstrable results backed by data that have actually changed children's and families' lives.

- Held to consistently high expectations about what the community and we can achieve and influenced others to reach for this level of quality, performance.
- We don't demand ownership. We work in partnership to help the community achieve its aims. When the community owns it, sustainability is more assured.
- Programs have been for all families.
- Commission has valued the community voices and while setting high expectations, based support on what community sees as needs of community and how to build change in their community resulting in strong community specific approaches.

B. For What More Had Commission Hoped?

- Hoped we'd be further along the policy continuum (preschool for all and healthcare) – but recognize the conversation has changed from *if* to *when*

C. What Is The Transition Status of Our Initiatives?

(See attached charts for programs and initiatives: School Readiness Sites, Children's Health Initiative, Health Advocacy and Literacy, Special Needs/Mental Health)

MarinKids- infrastructure is in place. Building and maintaining partnerships to drive policy change. Developing partnerships to promote voter participation in investments for children.

D. What Are Key Lessons Learned?

- Be consistent and hang in there. Nothing happens overnight; change takes time and is incremental
- Expect the unexpected – be nimble, flexible, responsive – be prepared for opportunities and shifts
- Keep your eyes on the prize helps in rough times
- We cannot escape politics – but can continue to work and succeed in the process.
- Need a committed and trusted staff that is respected in the community
- Engage the whole community and all generations
- As the landscape changes, be open to pulling back and pushing forward in a different approach to achieve goals (e.g., CHI)
- Convening people builds community will and moves the work forward
- Trust the voice of the community to set the agenda for themselves
- Walk your talk -Important for our way of internal operation to match the values we have articulated for those we work with. Consistent application of our theory of change and guiding principles is important to the success of our Commission, our endeavors and relationships throughout the community.
- Two-way communication – letting people know your goals and intentions while listening to them – developing a framework for partnerships that takes both into account.
- You have to have a face in the community. Personal connections can drive the work.

- Communicate what why and how: People want to know what we are doing; messaging matters to help others know why the work is important and necessary.
- Be thoughtful in the development process and focus on outcomes.
- Data matters: Having local data provides evidence of the efficacy of our work – provides tools for communication.
- Fund evaluation: the effort of collecting and analyzing the data.
- Ask for the data from partners in ways that are feasible and that this process is a key to funding - the funder is going to get evaluation information back.
- Set high expectations: Ask for specific outcomes, data and a collaborative working environment. This is a model for funders and one that can be used going forward and for other funding situations.
- Consistency, clarity and maintain direction
- Collaborate at multiple levels and expect it from others. Funders should collaborate with those funded (F5M at forefront). This sets the stage for how work will happen in the future.
- It is hard to do long range planning in a changing world.

III. CURRENT CONTEXT

A. What Trends May Have Implications for Planning?

- Economy – property values down, diminishing tax base, more difficult to pass ballot initiatives – people are wary and weary
- Recession – inordinately affecting certain populations
- Political division – moving away from collaboration
- The focus on a global economy and global approaches can take away from what is or can happen locally.
- There is an Invisible population among whom safety net and basic needs are not being met.
- Resources that might be directed towards long-term goals are now being directed towards immediate needs.
- F5 was intended to enhance infrastructure, but the gains are fragile when the institutions are rapidly changing or crumbling due to economic challenges.
- The systems that people have depended upon are no longer there in the same way. We are challenged to continue to advocate for continuation of these supports while building community capacity and self-reliance - ways in which communities can care for themselves.
- With the ongoing loss of the social safety net, there is disenchantment with government’s ability to provide opportunity for all. This could be an opportunity to foster resiliency in the community – look to people for local action.

- Changing demographics in Marin – aging and increasingly diverse population with wide and growing disparity in income and opportunity.
 - Cost to care for aged is going to hit many families and communities – may reduce philanthropy.
 - There is a huge tank of expertise and experience among the healthy aging.
 - Cultural shifts provide opportunities for new approaches and thinking
- Business community recognizes the science behind brain development 0-5– workforce implications both future and current – healthy and cared for children makes for more productive employees now and in the future
- Because safety net is frayed and the role of F5 is not to supplant, our work must be relatable to supporting the safety net; by focusing on policy development we can continue to use resources to drive broader changes that can assist families and children now and in the future
- Those who have been partners and our traditional drivers of change from the beginning may be too stressed and focused on the short term to be as present as in the past due to cuts and capacity. Commission needs to continue to look long term.
- There is a growing understanding that without policy change nothing really changes. We foresee a future with understanding value of policy engagement. (Similar to how understanding of added value of evaluation has shifted).

B. What does this imply about approaches?

- Invest in multipliers - those who are acting at local level.
- Focus on systems in order to change policy. To do this we need ground level involvement and community will. We have an opportunity to do things others cannot do at this time.
- Continue to listen to and bring forward the voices of community.
- Be clear about our vision. Develop core priorities and integrities to ground our work as things will continue to change. Show people where we hope to go and how what we have done and what we choose to do now will contribute to that change. Show the pieces and tie them together. (F5M has been strong in visually representing ideas – which has helped in work to engage others.)
- Support and promote shared countywide accountability. Alignment of funders, agencies and policymakers throughout county is more important than ever to use resources wisely, drive outcomes and leverage well. Strategic decision-making across agencies and decision-making bodies can promote a consistent vision for Marin’s children and families. (Does F5M have the clout to do this? With whom do we need to work and how?)

C. Challenges and Opportunities Going Forward

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<p>Diminishing resources – public agencies, funders, F5 Marin</p> <p>Belt tightening affects grassroots organizations first</p> <p>Cultural shift may be occurring about who is responsible for the health of our children and families. Do we have shared responsibility? – a broad and currently divisive social dialogue</p> <p>People are weary, workloads have grown and there is less time to think with others about longer term solutions; staffs are cut and needs/demands have increased</p> <p>Letting of programs and knowing some children may not be served as a result – First 5 Marin has been on the path of building community capacity but understand as we go there will be losses</p>	<p>MarinKids - This could be a movement moment for out of the box work at the local level. Time for advocacy and to mobilize partners including the business community and build shared responsibility in the community</p> <p>Time to align resources and leverage what is available</p> <p>Empowering the community with what is possible</p> <p>Empowering supporting community ability to sustain gains</p> <p>Setting the bar high enough to influence change that doesn't just maintain the insufficient</p>

I. COMMISSION MISSION, VISION AND ROLE

A. Mission (Reaffirmed)

The mission of First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission is to **promote** opportunities for all children in Marin to thrive in supportive and nurturing families, enter school healthy and ready to learn, and become productive members of society.

B. Vision (edited)

Together with families, communities and other partners, the First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission will create a Marin where the health and welfare of all of our children is at the core of decisions at every level of our political and public institutions, and in every community.

There will be understanding across and among communities about the varied opportunities and needs of children. As a community, Marin will act upon the knowledge that what we do to increase the potential of less advantaged children improves the potential for all children. Families will have the knowledge and tools to advocate for their children.

*As a result of our efforts, **all** 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 wellbeing.*

C. The Way We Work

First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission is 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.

The Commission *conveys information* about best and promising practices to communities, *facilitates integration* of those practices into local systems, and *connects influences systems transformation and public policy change* for the good of all children and their families.

D. Role of Commission (REVISED)

Strategic Advocate: Using data, research and experience to inform the public and policymakers and influence policy and systems change for 0-5

Convenor: Bringing community and strategic partners together to understand issues and develop policies and strategies to drive change

Partner: Building and supporting partnerships that implement collaborative, broad-based solutions to critical needs and address inequity

Capacity Builder: Providing access to resources and information for communities and organizations to advocate for, develop or implement policies and best practices

Catalyst: Sparking grassroots and countywide efforts that support F5 Marin goals.

II. FUTURE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT OF RESOURCES

A. Potential Framework (See attached Framework)

The Commission discussed a potential framework for implementation that places Priority Result: *Marin Values and Invests in All Children* as the primary result to drive other results: *Children are Healthy* and *Children are Ready for School*.

B. Principles/Rationale for Investment

The Commission discussed key principles for investment of Commission resources going forward:

- Leveraging financial and technical resources - Invest where we can leverage other resources
- Leveraging influence for policy and systems change – look at the potential for funding to maintain or increase influence in systems change, policies or practices and engage leaders, systems and institutions. (Role of the Commission in transitional kindergarten process– can we influence the quality of this in promoting ECE practices?)
- Sustaining partnerships for long term policy and systems change and resources - Understand where we are a key funding and policy partner that if gone will result in too much ground lost. These are areas where policy change is

underway or where our funding provides us the opportunity to influence policy or critical funding. (e.g., CHI.)

- Supporting community capacity building to implement best or promising practices – spark/ignite change through convening, education and capacity building in areas where commission already has fertilized the ground and grown roots. Support training, assistance, educational forums to spark implementation of quality programs or practices in communities and countywide (e.g., Training ‘playgroup’ leaders...funding training for trainers). Promote community innovation to address needs within our priorities: promising practices and emerging models.
- Assuring access for the most vulnerable - Fills critical safety net resource gap for effective services where no other resources are likely now. (E.g., subsidized child care and healthcare insurance) Part of our job is to stay aware and make visible needs of the ‘invisible communities’.
- Mobilizing public will and grassroots advocacy. Infrastructure and capacity building for community and advocacy action

C. Investment Approach

The Commission determined that regardless of resources available (AB99), they would adopt a combination of strategies for utilizing resources. The investments will:

- (1) Seed, maintain or deepen broader policy change efforts to improve the health, wellbeing and school readiness of young children and supports families.
- (2) Further promote/support transition of initiatives to community ownership where there is strong evidence that such support would provide the impetus/momentum for sustainability or adoption of programs by others or promote policy change to support our aims.

Specific Ideas Brainstormed:

- Develop a policy platform for 0-5 in Marin – develop resolutions and legislation – working with partners to align legislative agenda
- Sponsor training to bring best practice models
- Support advocacy efforts and community mobilizing
- Convene partners
- Provide public education through a variety of media
- Drive toward reducing disparities and assuring access
- Capacity building can be conducted in a way to infuse with our values, high expectations and accountability.
- Use convening to support efforts and sustainability
- Bring evidence-based learning and understanding to the table as programs are adopted.

- Use challenge grant – e.g., Novato – perhaps propose a challenge grant for school district to take the remaining classrooms.
- Conduct candidate forums with MarinKids
- Host ‘expert’ presentations – subject matter
 - Who can we partner with in doing these?
 - MarinKids can work on providing these opportunities
- Work toward collective impact – shared measures of accountability across agencies, funders, organizations in Marin. What are the shared measures/indicators?
- Assess type of evaluation and data collection going forward; supports for local data collection and communication (Everyone wants data – difficult to sustain at CBOs without funding). In view of how we are changing our funding, what does the collection of that data look like?