

First 5 Riverside County
Riverside County Early Care and Education Fund

- **Overview** – Riverside County Board of Supervisors allocated Federal American Rescue Plan Act Funds to First 5 Riverside County to support the retention and recruitment of the Early Care and Education workforce.
- **Challenge** – Studies show that the lack of available care for children is most significant in communities with the highest need. Additionally, the ECE workforce is identified as having high staff turnover, low pay, need for qualified staffing, as well as other barriers for ECE programs to function at full capacity.
- **Solution** – The Riverside County Early Care & Education (ECE) Recovery Fund was launched in 2021 to invest in infrastructure development expanding access to child care spaces and to incentivize qualified staff to join the ECE workforce and remain in the field. A \$2,400 wage enhancement stipend was issued through four payments over a three-year-period to supplement income and recognize the importance of the role of those employed in the ECE field, specifically those working with children ages 0-5.
- **Innovation** –First 5 Riverside County (FRC) drove the processes and procedures for executing over 9,600 total wage enhancement payments and retaining 1,647 providers that were eligible for all four rounds. A database developed for quality improvement investments and training platforms in F5RC’s Quality Early Learning investment partnerships repurposed as a data platform for provider applications. A new interface was built and tailored to facilitate applications and payments coordinated across County Departments, with F5RC staff supporting the technical assistance, communication, and review of applications. The Wage Enhancement distributed by F5RC was an excellent example of a collaborative effort between internal and external county departments to expedite and execute payments directly to providers quickly in each round. Financial incentives were distributed to 1,647 childcare staff throughout Riverside County, including those employed in our most disproportionately underserved communities.
- **Results** – F5RC executed four payment cycles of Wage Enhancement resulting in a 71-76% retention rate of applicants in each cycle. Child care providers throughout the county have expressed their sincere gratitude for the recognition of the work they do by means of a financial incentive and that this payment has assisted with living expenses, inflation, and overall increase quality of life. F5RC has contracted with UC Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Child Care Employment to fully evaluate the impact of the Riverside County investment in staff turnover and ECE provider wellbeing as a result of the responsiveness of the investment.

- **Replicability** – The platform interface and model utilized by F5RC could be replicated or components used as examples for other county agencies exploring possibilities for workforce wage enhancements and investments in close partnership and coordination with the Auditors Controllers Office and Information Technology. The evaluation results of the investment will contribute and inform the national policy dialogue on wage influence on program quality and access.
- **Project or Program Contact** – Charna Widby - Deputy Director, Riverside County Children & Families Commission - 585 Technology Court - Riverside, CA 92507 - (951) 955-0895 cwidby@rivco.org
- **Additional Materials** – ARPA Infographic and Video