

# FIRST 5 INYO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION OPERATING GUIDELINES

This document contains the procedures that describe how the First 5 Inyo County Commission will operate in conducting business. They are designed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the mission of the Commission.

## ROLES OF THE COMMISSION AND STAFF

There are eight key roles and responsibilities for both the Commission and the First 5 Staff of the Commission. A description and comparison of the Commission itself as compared to the First 5 Staff in general are outlined in the table below. These definitions are intended to clarify the duties and responsibilities for the key resources that enable the Commission to achieve its mission.

### Commission

1. ***Make strategic policy decisions.*** The Commission is expected to make policy decisions related to the development of programs and allocation of resources to achieve the goals identified in the California Children and Families First Act of 1998. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to:
  - Develop and adopt an adequate and complete county strategic plan for the support and improvement of early childhood development within Inyo County. Ensure that the strategic plan meets all requirements of the California Children and Families First Act of 1998. (Bylaws, Article II)
  - Carry out an annual review of the strategic plan,
  - Submit the adopted strategic plan and any subsequent revisions thereto to the State Commission,
2. ***Establish and act in accordance with the mission, vision and guiding principles of the organization.*** The Commission is responsible for establishing the short and long term vision to be achieved, for establishing the mission of the Commission and for defining and adhering to the principles under which the Commission will act.
3. ***Be the ultimate decision making body.*** The Commission is responsible to review, revise and approve policies related to the development of programs and allocation of resources to achieve the goals of the Commission and its strategic plan. *The Commission's decision-making process and responsibilities can be found later in this document.*

### First 5 Staff / Staff

1. ***Support the Commission and its planning efforts.*** First 5 Staff will organize strategic and other organizational planning efforts and provide support as requested by the Commission in the development of such plans. The First 5 Staff will:
  - Serve as a professional advisor to the Commission, providing regular feedback to the Commission.
  - Inform the Commission fully and accurately regarding the status of activities and issues affecting the organization.
  - Interpret the needs of the organization and present problems and issues that should be considered by the Commission.
2. ***Assist with policy development and implement policies adopted by the Board.*** The First 5 Staff is expected to:
  - Recommend appropriate policies for consideration.
  - Gather data and community input, and provide other analysis and suggestions as needed to assist the Commission in enacting effective policies.
  - Support policy decisions of the Commission.
  - Implement and ensure ongoing compliance with such policies.
  - Research necessary program and allocation of resources issues.
  - Analyze the process and content issues for each option to be considered.

## Commission

4. ***Provide fiscal accountability.*** Specific duties in this area include to:
  - Allocate the moneys in the Children and Families Trust Fund, consistent with the requirements of the Act and the adopted strategic plan.
  - Define a process and priorities related to the distribution of funds, consistent with the Commission's strategic plan.
  - Approve an annual report and the financial audit, conducting at least one public hearing before adopting the audit.
  - Adopt an annual budget detailing planned income and expenditures for the coming fiscal year.
5. ***Accept legal responsibility.*** The Commission will enter into contracts as necessary or appropriate to carry out the provisions and purposes of the Children and Families Act in accordance with the standards and procedures of the County.
6. ***Provide community accountability.*** The Commission will review and approve an annual report of results achieved and actions underway, for presentation to the community. The Commission regularly obtains feedback from the community.
7. ***Provide visibility, active leadership, and advocacy in the community.*** The Commission is a catalyst for positive change affecting young children and their families, and will take a visible leadership role in the community to advocate for the needs of children and families.
8. ***Support the First 5 Staff.*** Duties in this area include:
  - Provide support to the First 5 Staff in carrying out their professional duties, in accordance with the personnel policies of HHS Inyo County.
  - Set up appropriate checks and balances, holding the First 5 Staff accountable for the supervision of the organization.
  - Provide feedback to HHS regarding staff development and performance. HHS will provide regular verbal and (or) written evaluation to First 5 Staff on strengths, areas for growth, and overall effectiveness in accordance with the employment policies of Inyo County.

## First 5 Staff / Staff

- Evaluate all information regarding options and forward a recommendation with rationale for the recommendation.
  - Effectively communicate issues and changes in options or recommendations to the Commission to ensure it has the information it needs to make a decision.
3. ***Serve as the primary point of contact for the community and the Commission.*** The First 5 Staff will provide friendly, professional service and be accessible to both community members and the Commissioners working to maintain positive relationships with these constituents.
  4. ***Frame decisions and get them ready to be implemented.*** The First 5 Staff is responsible for understanding Commission decisions, then developing more detailed plans/processes and organizing the resources needed to implement the decisions.
  5. ***Conduct and/or manage all operational activities.*** The First 5 Staff will perform or cause to be performed in an effective manner all operational and administrative duties necessary to implement the strategic plan and other decisions of the Commission. This includes day-to-day fiscal operations, contract development and monitoring, public relations, preparing reports and grant applications, interactions with the State Commission, and other such duties required to implement the strategic plan and Commission decisions that are not stated elsewhere in the description of staff roles.
  6. ***Develop an annual budget.*** The First 5 Staff is responsible for preparing a detailed annual budget according to guidelines set by the Commission and presenting it to the Budget Committee for consideration.
  7. ***Market the Commission and its leadership role within the community.*** The First 5 Staff is responsible for raising community awareness of the work of the Commission. This role also involves managing media and public relations efforts, as well as communicating the Commission's plans and goals to the community.

## Commission

## First 5 Staff / Staff

8. **Manage Contractors.** The First 5 Staff will ensure that, subject to budget constraints, sufficient trained resources are available and guided in carrying out the work of the organization. This includes:
  - Contract with independent contractors in accordance with standards and procedures of the County.
  - Provide support to the staff and contractors in carrying out their professional duties, including timely and appropriate information needed by staff and contractors to function effectively.
  - Devote time to developing the staff.
  - Evaluate the work of staff and contractors and provide regular verbal and/or written feedback on strengths, areas for growth, and overall performance.
  - Ensure that all legal and regulatory requirements related to staff are met.

### **OTHER EXPECTATIONS OF COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF**

Additional expectations for Commissioners in carrying out their roles and responsibilities are:

- ❖ Abide by all laws and regulations, including conflict of interest.
- ❖ “Wear the hat” of the Commission when participating in the work of the Commission, seeking to represent the many constituencies affected by the Commission.
- ❖ Share relevant information with the First 5 Staff in a timely manner.
- ❖ Support the Chairperson and staff of the Commission.
- ❖ Complete an annual Commission Self Assessment to promote organization-level accountability.

Additional guidelines for staff to follow in carrying out their roles and responsibilities are:

- ❖ Act ethically, following all laws that govern the Commission.
- ❖ Get information to the Commission in a timely and effective manner to prepare them to make good decisions.
- ❖ Effectively communicate issues of import to the Commission and ensure that all Commissioners have access to the same information.
- ❖ Support the Chairperson and Commissioners.
- ❖ Be aware of the impact of nonverbal behavior or actions on others.

## ROLES OF COMMITTEES AND OFFICERS

Ad hoc Committees of the Commission may be established as needed. While standing Committees are allowable per the Bylaws of the Commission, at this time, all Committees of the Commission are ad hoc Committees. General protocols that pertain to ad hoc Committees include:

- Each ad hoc Committee includes at least two Commissioners.
- Each ad hoc Committee has one or more Commission staff assigned to it.
- Commissioners serving on an ad hoc Committee are responsible for communicating results and recommendations that arise from the Committee to other Commissioners during Commission meetings as appropriate and timely.
- Ad hoc Committee Chairs should schedule meetings in conjunction with the First 5 Staff. The First 5 Staff should be present at all meetings except for Personnel Committee meetings related to oversight of the First 5 Staff.
- Ad hoc Committees are convened to accomplish a specific task with a defined scope of work from the Commission prior to convening.
- Unless otherwise directed, Ad hoc Committees make recommendations for actions that are then subject to the decision of the full Commission.
- Ad hoc Committees meet as needed until such time as they have satisfied their scope of work.

The roles and responsibilities of Officer Positions of the Commission are outlined below.

### *Chair*

Preside at all meetings of the Commission.

Direct staff to establish Committees (standing or ad hoc).

Conduct all Commission meetings in accordance with these operating principles.

Structure Commission meetings per items on the agenda, ensuring that the ground rules agreed to by the Commission are adhered to.

### *Vice Chair*

The Vice Chair shall act in the absence of the Chair.

The Vice Chair shall support the Chair in ensuring that the Commission's operating principles are considered and applied during Commission meetings.

## GUIDELINES FOR COMMISSION MEETINGS

The following processes can be established to provide structure and improve the efficiency of Commission meetings. They are designed to ensure that the Commission remains mission focused and is able to conduct the work of the Commission on behalf of children 0 to 5 and their families in Inyo County.

### **Prior to and between Commission Meetings:**

- Commissions have committed to reading and reviewing all materials prior to the Commission meeting,
- If a Commissioner receives information that impacts the work of the Commission and its staff, the Commissioner will share that information with the First 5 Staff at the first available opportunity to ensure the optimum amount of time possible to address the issue.
- The First 5 Staff will share information and issues with Commissioners between meetings via electronic updates.
- Commissioners, staff, and community stakeholders who wish to request an item to be included on a Commission agenda will present the agenda item and pertinent materials to the Executive Director for Commission review at least 7 days prior to the Commission meeting.
- Commission staff will review the materials and make a determination regarding its placement on the agenda. A determination will be made after considering factors including but not limited to the following:
  - Completeness of material
  - Commission priorities
  - Other pending actions
  - Time available on the agenda
  - Pertinence to the Commission strategic plan.
- Following an evaluation by Commission staff of items requested for placement on the agenda , a determination may be made as follows:
  - The item may be placed on the agenda
  - The item may be placed on the study session agenda for discussion and presentation only,
  - The item may be deemed incomplete, with a request for additional information to evaluate its appropriateness to be placed on the agenda
  - The item may be deemed outside the scope of the Commission interest
- Commission staff will communicate the results of said determination to the individual or agency requesting the agenda item and provide feedback on future actions as deemed necessary regarding the item.

### **At the beginning of Commission Meetings:**

- Each Commission meeting will begin by referencing the Commission's mission and ground rules for discussion, as noted in the following section, Guidelines for Communication.
- The Commission meeting will begin with public comment. Individuals are invited to make public comments on items not listed on the agenda and then may speak once they are acknowledged by the Chairperson.

### **During Commission Meetings:**

- The Chairperson will structure the meeting by following the published agenda.
- Generally, meetings will not last beyond two hours.
- All Commissioners, staff and stakeholders in attendance will abide by the established ground rules for the meeting.
- Materials will not be accepted or reviewed unless copies are provided to all staff and Commissioners.

## **GROUND RULES**

The following “ground rules” have been established to guide how discussions are conducted in Commission and Committee meetings. The purpose is to ensure that meeting time is productive, while incorporating the unique perspectives and expertise of each Commissioner and staff person that is participating.

### **Meeting Ground Rules**

1. Show mutual respect and trust
2. Commit to open communication and disclosure; be honest
3. All ideas are valid. We agree not to attack, downplay or belittle the ideas of others.
4. Seek to understand the position of others.
5. Don’t reach conclusions before the options are fully defined.
6. Stay focused on the topic at hand.
7. No one speaks until acknowledged by the Chairperson
8. Have fun!

## **DECISION-MAKING PROTOCOLS**

Decisions that rest with the Board of Supervisors include, but are not limited to:

- Appointing of Commission Members
- Sanctioning Bylaws
- Approving Contracts
- Approving Annual Budgeting
- Approving Budget Amendments
- Fiscal actions such as accepting grants or agreeing to serve as a pass through for funds to be routed to other organizations.

Decisions that rest with HHS Inyo County include, but are not limited to:

- Personnel supervision and recommendations related to the First 5 staff positions in accordance with the rules and regulations governing Inyo County personnel.
- Approval of funding up to county limits – currently \$2,500 – without BOS approval
- Approval of printed materials and media releases prior to distribution

Decisions that rest with the Commission as a whole include, but are not limited to:

- Funding decisions, including approval and cancellation of organizations/projects to receive funds from the Commission and approval of the annual budget and any amendments thereto.
- Approving the strategic plan and any revisions to the plan
- Setting the overall priorities of the organization
- Developing policies, including all types such as those affecting the structure of the Commission, governance policies such as those contained in these guidelines, and processes and procedures to be followed
- Drafting Bylaws

No independent decision-making authority has been granted to any Committee or Officer.

Decisions that rest with the First 5 Staff include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing and managing the budget, including spending decisions that in alignment with the approved budget and within any spending limits set by the Commission
- Implementing and managing operational details within the guidelines set by the Commission, as described in the Roles and Responsibilities section of these guidelines

## COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

This section contains protocols for how Commissioners and staff will communicate with each other. The basic guidelines are:

- ❖ For any item of substance, Commissioners should contact the First 5 Staff and only go to other staff persons if/when agreed or asked to by the First 5 Staff.
- ❖ The First 5 Staff and the Commission agree to engage in direct, open, two-way communication in accordance with the ground rules established.
- ❖ Formal communications from the First 5 Staff and staff to the Commission should occur in the following ways:
  - ◆ Information related to items on a Commission meeting agenda should be compiled into an organized information packet and distributed by staff.
  - ◆ Items to be communicated between Commission meetings or on topics not related to Commission agenda items should be compiled into updates sent via e-mail to all Commissioners. These updates can convey any items that staff believes would be useful for Commissioners to know.
  - ◆ In compliance with the Brown Act and other pertinent legislation.

In addition to the internal communications between Commissioners and staff, it is important to recognize that each Commissioner is a liaison to one or more key community stakeholders, such as a member of the Board of Supervisors. It is the responsibility of each Commissioner to know who they are serving as the liaison to, and to communicate matters related to the Commission as appropriate.