



Memo

To: Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County

From: Sam McCoy, Director of Programs and Evaluation

Date: May 18, 2023

Re: Recommendation to Grant Authority to the Executive Director to Contract the Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)

Background

Ventura County is home to approximately twenty thousand indigenous Mixtec people from the Oaxaca region of southern Mexico. The Mixteco families of Ventura County are often culturally and linguistically isolated, as many are illiterate, and most speak neither Spanish nor English, but only their native language, Mixteco or another indigenous dialect from their home region. Due to this, Mixteco families often face exploitation and discrimination in labor, housing, and everyday life. Most live in extreme poverty and lack basic provisions such as adequate housing, food, clothing, and other necessities. Central to their struggle is the fact that they cannot communicate with people beyond their own indigenous community, thus impeding their ability to obtain appropriate healthcare, educate themselves and their children.

Founded in 2001, the Mixteco Indigena Community Organization Project (MICOP) has spent 20 years supporting, empowering and advocating for one of Ventura County's most disadvantaged populations. First 5 Ventura County (F5VC) first began contracting with MICOP in 2005 to recruit and train Mixtec Promotores community outreach workers to identify Mixteco families with children 0-5 in need of access to community resources. In addition, MICOP staff provided culturally appropriate early education opportunities for families and supported F5VC NfLs with translation and interpretation to assist Mixtec families with appropriate referrals and care coordination.

MICOP promotores have been an integral component of the Neighborhoods for Learning sites in Oxnard, Port Hueneme, and Rio. Recognizing the critical services MICOP provides to Mixtec families with children prenatal to 5, the prior NfL administrator, Interface Children and Family Services, continued contracting with MICOP during FY2019-21.

In FY2021-23, F5VC transitioned implementation of the NfL initiative in-house. To continue providing services for Mixtec families, MICOP was awarded a 2-year contract for \$250,000 annually as part of the overall Neighborhoods for Learning initiative. The current contract is slated to end June 30, 2023.

MICOP has decades of experience, unparalleled relationships and trust with Mixteco speaking families. In partnership with the NfL team, promotores deliver a unique combination of culturally appropriate care coordination and parenting education and child development classes to this vulnerable population.

Recommendation

The recommended action would grant authority to the Executive Director to continue contracting with existing service provider Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project to provide early childhood and family support services for Mixtec children prenatal to age 5 and their families living in Ventura County for FY 2023-26, not to exceed \$750,000. No new allocation of resources is required as the funds are budgeted within the Neighborhoods for Learning initiative.