

First 5 Sacramento

Community Connections Grants

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Community Connections Grant?

First 5 Sacramento provides seed money up to \$5,000 for groups of volunteer community members in Sacramento County who create year-long projects that benefit children ages 0-5 and build lasting connections between community members. Community driven projects build connections by bringing the community together around a relevant child-focused topic (i.e. nutrition, literacy, play groups, parent support etc.).

2. Who can apply for a Community Connections Grant?

A group of at least 3 non-related community members who reside in Sacramento County are eligible to apply. Businesses, agencies, and non-profits are not eligible to apply; however, they are encouraged to provide support to group projects in their community.

3. When will the next round of applications be released?

Please contact Alejandra Labrado at First 5 Sacramento (Phone: 916-876-5873, Email: labradoa@saccounty.net)

4. How do I apply for a Community Connections Grant?

- Once the funding cycle has been released, visit www.first5sacramento.net/programs for the application and more information.
- Find at least two other non-related people who want to do the project with you, and start brainstorming ideas.
- Plan a project that benefits children ages 0-5 and builds connections with others in the community.
- Choose a sponsoring agency to help support your project. *See below about sponsoring agencies.*
- Contact First 5 to discuss your idea and obtain approval.
- Complete the grant application!

5. What is a Sponsoring Agency?

A sponsoring agency can donate their time in a supportive role for your project. For example, they can review your application, help you with your ideas, conduct outreach, or provide a meeting space for your group. If you do not already have a sponsoring agency, First 5 can assign one to you. Some examples of sponsoring agencies are: Family Resource Centers, Libraries, Churches, Community Based Organizations, etc.

6. What Makes a Project A “Good Fit” For These Funds?

There are great ideas for projects in the community. Despite how “great” the project may be, First 5 is limited to use these funds for community driven projects that benefit young children and provide opportunities to build relationships among other community members.

Projects that are a good fit include:

- An idea that is community driven (not directed by an agency)
- Volunteers who manage the entire project and are committed to seeing it through (not a “one man show”)
- Activities that are focused on young children (0-5 years of age)
- Parent/Child Interaction
- Getting together with other parents/families in the community to build connections
- Regular meetings to allow opportunity to build relationships
- Partnerships with agencies/schools/organizations/churches in their community (do not receive funds)
- An original (new) project

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7. What are some examples of a “Good Fit”?

| NOT a Good Fit for CCG Funds: | Why not? | Good Fit for CCG |
|---|---|--|
| Sponsorship for 3-5 year olds to play soccer on a team. | Provides \$, not activities; Lacks parent involvement and opportunity to build relationships. | Project for 3-5 years olds to socialize and play soccer <u>together with their families</u> on a <u>weekly</u> basis. |
| An annual block party event. | Lacks opportunity to build relationships over time. | <u>Monthly Family Fun Nights</u> where <u>neighbors participate</u> in the planning and organization of meetings and events. |
| A non-profit agency wants to add a cultural program for young children. | Agency’s idea. Not community driven. | <u>Families want</u> to gather <u>monthly</u> to learn about different cultures through books, music, food and more. They partner with a non-profit to provide them with space for free. |
| A nutritionist who wants to teach parents how to cook healthier for their children. | Not community driven. Provides service vs. community participating together. | <u>Neighbors</u> who want to learn to cook healthier with and for their young children and <u>gather weekly</u> to share recipes and meals. |
| A community garden at a school maintained by 4 th graders. | Not a 0-5 year old focus; Limited community access. | A community garden maintained by grandparents <u>together with their preschool grandchildren</u> . |
| A father’s fitness class. | Lacks parent/ child interaction. | A father’s group focused on parenting topics and <u>interactive activities</u> with their <u>young children</u> . |
| A neighborhood group seeking funding to maintain their existing children’s art program. | Existing program. Must be new or an expansion. | A neighborhood group that would like to <u>expand</u> their children’s project to include music and dance activities for their families. |
| A church wants to reach out to families in their congregation with special needs. | Not community driven. Restricted to congregation. | <u>Church members</u> begin a support group and story time for families that have a young child with special needs. Families outside the church are invited. |

* All group activities must take place in Sacramento County

8. I’m interested but I’m not sure I have the time. How much of a time commitment does it involve?

These funds are not for one-time events. It is for activities that help build relationships with families with young children over time. The funding term is for up to one year. The amount of work depends on your proposal—how many times you are going to gather, the complexity of your proposal, and also the amount of help you receive from your co-group leaders and other volunteers. This is why we require a group of at least 3 to apply so that everyone is contributing to the project. Applying for these funds means that you are committing to coordinating activities, making purchases (with funding provided), distributing resources, and reporting monthly how things are going (successes and challenges).

9. I have a great idea for a grant, but I don’t have meeting space. Can I use funds for facility fees?

Not for regular meetings. These grants are seed money. We want you to continue meeting after the First 5 funded term. If we paid rental facility fees, your group would not be sustainable after the term. We encourage you to partner with organizations in your community that will provide space for free. Some examples are: Family Resource Centers, Libraries, Parks, Churches, Community Centers. On a case by case scenario, it may be allowable to use a reasonable amount of grant funds for a special event that your group is participating in. Contact First 5 to discuss this option.

10. Many families I would like to reach through applying for this grant don't have transportation. Can I use funds to buy them Uber or bus passes to attend meetings?

Transportation is a challenge across all First 5 funded programs. Unfortunately, these expenses will not help your group be sustainable. Contact First 5 at the beginning of your grant to brainstorm ideas to help with transportation.

11. Can we use these funds to purchase food?

This is a unique program that does allow the purchase of food. However, there are limits. CCG allows for the purchase of food with the funds under the following guidelines:

- a. Food expenses should not exceed 10% of the budget.
- b. When providing food at group events, it should be part of regular meetings/events that occur during a meal or snack time.
- c. When providing snacks, ensure there are healthy options (it is important to model positive and healthy habits to group members).
- d. Solicit donations when possible. This builds community with local businesses and also helps to sustain the group after First 5 funding ends. A letter from First 5 and CAPC can be provided to you.
- e. Encourage potlucks, if appropriate. This builds relationships among community members and gives everyone a role in participating. It also helps to sustain your group.
- f. Going out to eat with group members may not be an appropriate use of tax dollars. Contact First 5 if you are considering this as an activity.

12. I have submitted my application, now what?

- Make sure you receive a confirmation that your application was received by the deadline.
- Your application will be reviewed and scored by a committee.
- You will be notified within 45 days of the deadline if your application received a passing score and will be recommended for funding.
- If it is being recommended for funding, you will be asked to attend the First 5 Commission meeting for approval.

13. If we have been approved, when can we get started?

Although the Commission has approved the recommendation to fund your group's application, that does not mean you can get started right away. The CCG team would like to meet with your group leaders first, and you will need to attend an orientation. These grants are public funds, so a contract must be signed before your group can start spending money and doing activities.

14. Is there a fiscal agent?

First 5 Sacramento contracts with the Child Abuse Prevention Center (CAPC) to provide fiscal agent services and program support for the Community Connections Grants. This significantly simplifies the process for the grantee. CAPC is a state, national and international training, education, research and resource center dedicated to strengthening children, families, and communities. For more information: www.thecapcenter.org. Your contract is with CAPC as your fiscal agent, not First 5.

15. Do I need to provide my own general liability insurance to hold group projects?

No. CAPC provides coverage for First 5, and its volunteers (that means CCG groups), as long as they are acting on behalf of First 5.

16. What are the media and marketing policies?

You will have to give attribution to First 5 Sacramento on all marketing for your project. (Attribution paragraph can be found on the www.first5ccg.com website). There will also be photo consent releases that

will be handed out at your events if there are pictures being taken of children. You will have to submit any material to First 5 for approval BEFORE you print and distribute it to the public.

17. Why do I need to fill out a monthly progress report?

These projects are funded by taxpayer dollars, so we do need to be accountable. A monthly progress report allows us to get a regular snapshot of how your project is going and whether or not it is meeting its original goals. In addition, the reports allow you to share with us your successes, challenges, and requests for help or support. We also look at all reports combined to look for trends and see how this grant program is making an impact in your community.

18. Where can I find forms that are required to implement CCG activities?

You can find forms at www.first5ccg.com. Forms include: monthly reports, sign in sheets, logo and attribution, expense logs, mileage forms, and much more.

19. Do we have to track attendance at our group meetings and events?

Yes. We will provide you with sign in sheets to track attendance at every meeting and event. This will help you fill out your monthly reports, and it also serves as back up documentation for your grant. It is important for us to know how many families with children ages 0-5 are benefiting from these funds.

20. How do we get the money to start spending?

First, open a checking account that is separate from your personal accounts. There are many challenges that arise from intermingling grant funds with your personal funds. To get started, make sure your contract is signed before making any purchases. Once the contract is signed, CAPC will send you a check with your initial payment of 10% of your approved grant, or an amount approved by First 5 for start-up costs. Once you receive the check, you can start spending for your activities. After that, payments will be issued in amounts of up to 10% of your budget once expense documentation is submitted and approved.

21. How long will it take for the funds to come through?

The first payment for your grant may be ready at the orientation when contracts are signed. Ongoing payments of up to 10% of the budget will be issued upon approval of expense documentation you submit. If other arrangements are needed, contact CAPC. You don't have to wait until you run out of money to submit expense documentation. We don't want group leaders to pay out of their pocket for CCG activities.

22. Why do we need to submit copies of receipts?

It is part of First 5's, as a government entity, process to review and approve expenditures. We try to make this easier for you so we accept pictures or scanned copies of receipts. Receipts must include the date, vendor, and items purchased on them.

23. How do we submit expense documentation?

Expense documentation includes the expense log AND copies of receipts. These should be submitted through email to the contact listed in your orientation binder (pictures of receipts are acceptable, but you must keep the originals). You also have the option of hand delivering and mailing them to CAPC.

24. We haven't received a check yet—what do we do?

Expense documentation that is submitted incomplete or incorrectly may cause a delay in payment. Payments are issued on the 5th and the 15th of the month. Expense log AND copies of receipts must be submitted one week prior to these disbursement dates. If it has been more than 2 weeks since you have submitted your expense documentation, follow up with the contact provided to you during orientation.

25. Can I be reimbursed for mileage?

Yes—It is optional for the group leader/s to claim mileage reimbursement (up to \$20 a month) for running errands for group activities. These funds, however, will come out of the grant budget. To claim mileage, the group leader must fill out the mileage log sheet, which can be found at www.first5ccg.com under the documents tab. Note: This is not reimbursing for gas. You must track your miles.

26. Is there an incentive to being a group leader?

Yes, if you request it on your grant application. A stipend for up to \$500 from the grant is allowed for the group leader/s at the end of the project term which is in acknowledgement of performing the following duties:

- Coordinating meetings
- Making purchases for group activities
- Collecting, organizing, and submitting receipts
- Completing and submitting monthly reports
- Distributing and collecting parent surveys (provided by First 5)
- **Completing the term of the project**

The stipend check will be made payable to the main group leader after the grantee has performed all of the end of term requirements. Group leaders who do not complete the project are ineligible to receive a stipend. Since the contract with the Fiscal Agent will only be with the main group leader, it is at their discretion if it split with group leaders.

27. Our group is stuck—we need some help and other resources. Is there anyone that can help us?

We're here to help and provide support. Contact Jen Cole jcole@thecapcenter.org for assistance, or we can arrange a meeting with First 5, CAPC, and your sponsoring agency to help you troubleshoot your challenges.

28. We realize that we need to make a slight change to our activities or budget. Can I just go ahead and do this without checking in with First 5?

Please do not make any significant changes without contacting First 5 staff first. We can work with you to make small changes to the activities or budget as long as it is still within the spirit and original content of the grant. We need advance notice of any changes and need to approve those charges. The best thing to do is to keep in touch with us as much as possible. We would like to hear how things are going and would like to know of upcoming events.

29. What kind of training and support do we receive as volunteer community leaders?

First 5 and CAPC work closely together to provide you with the support you need to be successful. We also reach out to other community partners to be a resource for you and your groups. For example, they can provide you with trainings that help you be a more effective leader in your community.

30. We're wrapping up our current project. Can we re-apply to continue funding our group?

No, projects are only funded once, with hopes that your group will find other means to sustain it. You may be eligible to apply for another grant which is a significant expansion of what has already been done or something entirely new.