



AGENDA ITEM: 11
DATE OF MEETING: October 22, 2015
ACTION: _____
INFORMATION: X

TOWN HALL TOOLKIT PROPOSAL

SUMMARY

Staff will provide an overview of a public relations proposal to create a “First 5 Town Hall Toolkit” (Toolkit) intended to build public will through grassroots engagement with families, communities, and policymakers on the importance of information and policies to support children ages 0 to 5 and their families (e.g., the early brain science behind Talk.Read.Sing.®) and the need to invest strategically in the first five years of children’s lives.

BACKGROUND

Strategic Plan Alignment

The intent of this proposal is aligned with First 5 California’s (F5CA) Strategic Priority Area 3 of the Strategic Plan to drive public engagement around health and development policies for children ages 0 to 5, their families, and communities; to create and strengthen partnerships with allies in local communities across the state in order to influence state and federal policymakers; and to build public will for a shared First 5 mission and for increased public investments in programs for children ages 0 to 5 and their families.

Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of this proposal is to advance a shared children’s policy agenda with our First 5 Association and county commission partners.

Town hall forums are a traditional and effective stage for public engagement on policy issues. Town halls provide a great setting to engage elected representatives and community stakeholders on issues of mutual interest and importance, and drive home to the elected officials and general public the importance of a town hall’s topics. However, issue-based town hall meetings with elected official and stakeholder attendees can be a complex event to successfully execute.

The proposed Toolkit is intended to serve as a support for interested First 5 county commissions to engage with their local, state, and federal elected officials and build public will for the First 5 movement at the local level. This online Toolkit will provide First

5 county commissions, elected officials, and their local partners with the research, issue information, and event organizational advice and supports that are crucial for designing an effective town hall-style meeting.

These efforts will generate community interest and engagement in the shared First 5 policy story, including local media interest such as news editorials and earned media, bolstering overall public awareness of First 5.

By supporting First 5 partners with the tools to engage policymakers and build influential local constituencies, this proposal will further the broader First 5 movement across communities and compel policymakers' commitment and accountability to children's issues and programs that are shared priorities for F5CA, the First 5 Association, and First 5 county commissions across the state.

PROPOSAL

F5CA staff will work with the First 5 Association to develop a comprehensive "First 5 Town Hall Toolkit" to aid interested First 5 county commissions in successfully engaging in local outreach, planning, and execution of First 5 town hall events. This proposal will utilize a three-pronged approach to generating differentiated grassroots support for the First 5 movement from local elected officials and community members:

- 1) Development, procurement, and dissemination of an online Toolkit for interested First 5 county commissions and state legislators that includes town hall issue papers and step-by-step instructions on how to execute a successful town hall.
- 2) Technical assistance offered to town hall planners to aid in implementing the Toolkit and executing First 5 town hall events.
- 3) Additional public relations support may be offered to participants to support the costs of local public relations outreach efforts and execution of First 5 town hall events.

First 5 county commissions will determine their individual level of interest and engagement in accessing any or all of these resources offered based on what works best locally.

F5CA staff will work closely with the First 5 Association in the development of Toolkit materials and the design of technical assistance for participants.

Target Participants

- First 5 county commissions for utilization of Toolkits and support resources to host and/or partner in community town halls on young children's issues during key points that may influence political will.
- Congressional and state legislative district offices for utilization of Toolkits in alignment with key points during the congressional and state legislative policy and budget sessions.

- Legislative Caucuses for dissemination of Toolkits to their membership as a method for engaging at the local level on children’s policy issues relevant to their work and messaging in local districts across the state.

F5CA staff will take steps to create partnerships by conducting outreach to inform target participants and gauge their interest in involvement, including assessing the level of participation.

Toolkit Development and Dissemination

The Toolkit and corresponding supports will be reflective of collective state-level policy goals, issues, and messaging that serve to advance shared goals between First 5 California’s Policy Agenda and the First 5 Association’s Policy Agenda, while allowing participants to customize materials with local data and parent and provider testimonials that provide a local lens to this larger agenda. The Toolkit will be available on F5CA’s website.

This comprehensive Toolkit will include, but is not limited to:

- Step-by-step guidelines on how to plan a town hall from start to finish, including sample planning timelines with corresponding task deadlines.
- Step-by-step “how-to” on outreach and enlistment of key local partner organizations and leaders, including sample outreach and invitation scripts.
- Step-by-step “how-to” on how to engage and enlist state and congressional elected officials, including sample outreach and invitations scripts.
- Step-by-step guidelines on how to develop a timely and relevant agenda, event format, and speakers.
- Sample materials that can be tailored to local communities, including:
 - Timely and relevant background materials for use in handouts, flyers, and PowerPoint presentations that communicate the statewide First 5 policy story while utilizing compelling local data and personal testimonials of local First 5 programs and services.
- Step-by-step guidelines on how to engage in media outreach efforts, including:
 - Timely and relevant background materials and potential stories to pitch to local media outlets.
 - Strategies for pitching local media outlets to cover town hall events, including back stories on featured speakers, programs, and issues in the lead up to events.

Development of these toolkit materials will include close coordination with the First 5 Association to align with the Association's policy priorities and grassroots media efforts.

Technical Support for Toolkit Implementation

Staff will work in collaboration with the First 5 Association to develop a technical assistance plan that is most appropriate for the needs of First 5 county commissions.

Technical support may be offered to First 5 county commissions that are interested in receiving additional hands-on support to implement the Toolkit and to plan and execute town hall events. This service would be provided by Fraser Communications or their public relations subcontractor. F5CA staff would oversee and monitor the technical assistance provided, including evaluating the need for and utilization of this resource by First 5 county commissions.

Funding Support for Outreach, Planning, and Execution

One of the barriers to successful town hall planning, as identified by local stakeholders, is cost. First 5 California may assist First 5 county commissions to support the costs of outreach, planning, and execution of town hall events for select county commissions.

CONCLUSION

This proposal is an informational item at this time. F5CA staff is currently in the process of vetting this concept with the First 5 Association and legislative partners, and will continue to edit and refine the proposal based on the feedback received. The goal is to return to the Commission at the January 28, 2016, meeting with an action item that includes a full proposal for the Commission's consideration.