



AGENDA ITEM: 12C -1

DATE OF MEETING: January 27, 2010

ACTION: X

INFORMATION: _____

Parent Signature Program Parent Resource Web Site

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

First 5 California staff request Commission approval to develop a comprehensive Parent Resource Web site. As one key part of a multi-faceted outreach approach to serve all parents, but especially hard-to-reach populations, First 5 California will develop a robust, user-friendly Web site for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 5. This proposal outlines a low-cost, high-impact approach that will amplify First 5 California's existing efforts while taking its on-line presence and utility to the next level.

There are 2.5 million children ages 0 to 5 in California, with at least 5 million parents and caregivers. This new Parent Resource Web site will be a highly effective and efficient way to reach most of them with information, services, and supports. The total proposed cost for this important Parent Signature Program is \$2.6 million through fiscal year 2012/2013.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, as part of its public education and outreach campaign, the Commission approved the development of a First 5 California Web site for parents. This "micro-site" primarily consists of existing First 5 California Web pages with some new content and revision to make the collection of materials easier to access by parents and caregivers. Since June 2009, the Parents' Web site has received more than 300,000 hits, with a minimum of 45,000 hits per month.

With the necessity and popularity of the micro-site established, we now are poised to take this valuable resource to the next level and develop a far more robust Web site for parents – one that continues and builds upon existing efforts along with a wealth of new information and many additional resources. This new and more comprehensive Web site will serve as an on-line "owners manual" for parents and caregivers, taking the *Kit for New Parents* concept to new heights.

To create a high-quality Parent Resource Web site from scratch would require several years of development and would cost many millions of dollars. Instead, we recommend building a high-quality, user-friendly site as quickly as possible and in a much more cost-effective way. After considerable research, we have determined that the most expedient

and cost-effective approach would be to partner with an existing parent Web site, then tailor its look, content, and “brand” to meet First 5 California’s needs. Specifically, staff proposes partnering with the Raising Children Network (RCN) in Australia to bring its comprehensive, user-friendly, and award-winning Web site to California.

DISCUSSION

Staff researched and evaluated an extensive array of existing, relevant parent Web sites in the hope of finding one with which we might partner. The Raising Children Network was the only site that not only met but exceeded First 5 California’s desired program elements.

The RCN Web site is a peer-reviewed and continuously updated information source. The centerpiece of RCN is its vast collection of current research on children and parenting – research that comes from experts all over the world, including the United States and California. Information and parent advice included on the Web site is based on that body of research, and written specifically for a parent/caregiver audience.

Since its launch in 1997, RCN has built an international reputation as a research leader in evidence-based parenting support. The site averages between **650,000 and 1 million page views each month**. A recent survey found that 91 percent of parents felt the RCN Web site made them more confident as parents, and 95 percent said they would recommend it to other parents.

The RCN Web site is organized by ages and stages: newborn, baby, toddler, and preschool. The “Grown-ups” page provides information on family management, fathers, work and family, childcare, and school referrals. Unlike most of the other sites that were reviewed and evaluated by staff, RCN Web pages are available at no cost, are free from advertising, and are focused on providing educational tools and information.

The RCN Web site took approximately three years to build, including hardware, software, and content, at a cost of approximately \$11 million.

Since Spring 2009, First 5 California staff has engaged in dialogue with representatives of the RCN in the form of in-person meetings, conference calls, and written correspondence. The RCN has received the necessary approvals to engage in these discussions as well as the proposed licensing agreement, and is currently working on a draft agreement.

For a complete history of the RCN and its parenting Web site, please see Attachment 1. The RCN parenting Web site can also be accessed at <http://raisingchildren.net.au/>.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends forming a partnership with the RCN to allow First 5 California to use and adapt existing information from the RCN Web site. This Web site has an abundance

of quality and user-friendly information for our targeted audience of parents and caregivers with children ages 0-5 and beyond. We intend to partner with a California-based organization to adapt the content of the RCN Web site. Further, First 5 California will also create and add new, original content to the Web site, as necessary or appropriate.

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities has an existing collaborative relationship with the Centre for Community Child Health at Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Victoria. Given this relationship, and given some of the adaptations it is currently doing with Australian, Canadian, and British resources for the United States environment, the UCLA Center is an example of a well-positioned organization that has the expertise to assist with the adaptation, updating, and upgrading of the Web site so that it would be relevant to California audiences and available in Spanish and English.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Description of Alternative 1

Develop comprehensive parent Web site from scratch

Pros

- Would allow for all content to be original to First 5 California

Cons

- Cost-prohibitive. Estimated cost to develop a comparable site with original content and similar functionality is approximately \$10 million.
- Labor and time-intensive. Would take 3 - 5 years to develop, thereby delaying services and impact.

Description of Alternative 2

Retain existing Parents' Web Site.

Pros

- Would not cost anything.

Cons

- The current Parents' Web site consists only of existing pages and links from the original First 5 California Web site. As such, it is limited in its capacity to provide a comprehensive set of services and supports for our target audiences.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Raising Children Network (RCN) briefing document

FUNDING REQUEST FISCAL DETAIL

Title of Request:	Parent Resource Web Site				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Program Disbursement <input type="checkbox"/> Special Disbursement	
Amount of Current Agreement:	Up to	N/A	Expenditures to Date:	N/A		
Current Term of Agreement:	N/A	Through	N/A			
		Fiscal Year Detail				
		FY 10-11	FY 11-12	FY 12-13	FY __ - __	
New Amount Requested:	Up to	\$2,600,000	\$2,100,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	
Total Amount of Agreement:	Up to	\$2,600,000				
Percent of Available Fund Balance Affected by Agreement			.02%	.002%	.002%	
Proposed Funding Term:	July 1, 2010	Through	June 30, 2013			
First 5 California Account Name:	Mass Media Communications	Account Number	0631	Fund Availability Confirmed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes By: Sandy Beck	
Statutory Purpose: Health and Safety Code 130105(a)(1)(A)	Six percent shall be deposited in a Mass Media Communications Account for communications to the general public utilizing television, radio, newspapers, and other mass media on subjects relating to and furthering the goals and purposes of this act, including, but not limited to, methods of nurturing and parenting that encourage proper childhood development, the informed selection of child care, information regarding health and social services, the prevention and cessation of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use by pregnant women, the detrimental effects of secondhand smoke on early childhood development, and to ensure that children are ready to enter school.					
Do our funds leverage others?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (explain) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Commission Funds	Leveraged Funds	Total Funds		
Key Deliverable Descriptions					Deliverable Date	
Licensed Website Use Agreement.					Upon execution of contract through contract period	
Developed Website Infrastructure.					Ongoing	
Content review, revision, and validation for cultural appropriateness.					Ongoing	
Ongoing Website support and maintenance.					Ongoing	