



**To:** Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County

**From:** Sam McCoy, Director of Programs and Evaluation

**Date:** February 25, 2021

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

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### **Background**

Ventura County is home to approximately twenty thousand indigenous Mixtec people from the Oaxaca region of southern Mexico. The Mixteco population 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. 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 of life. 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. F5VC first began contracting with MICOP in 2005 for an initial amount of \$50,000 to recruit and train 4 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 support F5VC NfLs with translation and interpretation to assist Mixtec families with appropriate referrals and care coordination.

For the last 15 years, MICOP promotores have been an integral and growing component of the First 5 Neighborhood for Learning family resource centers located throughout Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ocean View and Rio. In addition to a direct contract with F5VC, Oxnard Plains NfL's developed additional subcontracts with MICOP to expand services already funded by F5VC, culminating in an annual total of \$316,000 in FY 2018-19. When the F5VC NfL Initiative was consolidated in FY 2019-20 under the administration of Interface Children and Family Services, MICOP was awarded a 2-year subcontract for \$250,000 annually to continue providing critical services to Mixtec families with children 0-5.

Beginning in FY 2021-22, F5VC will implement the NfL initiative directly. To ensure continued implementation of existing services for children and parents of one of the most vulnerable populations within Ventura County, providing access to services to Mixtec families would continue to be embedded in the NfL model. MICOP has two decades of experience and unparalleled relationships of trust with Mixteco speaking families, developing a unique combination of culturally appropriate care coordination through promotores and delivering early education and child development classes in collaboration with First 5 Ventura County staff.

## **Recommendation**

The recommended action would grant authority to the Executive Director to enter into a direct contract with existing service provider Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project to ensure continued services for Mixtec children 0-5 and their families living in Ventura County. As a component of the Neighborhood for Learning initiative, the two year allocation would be \$500,000 for the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023.