



Head Start  
CALIFORNIA



# HEAD START CALIFORNIA **STRATEGIC PLAN** 2023 AND BEYOND

## PREPARED BY THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE:

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## INTRODUCTION

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We are living in momentous times. A global pandemic changed everything, and we are still recovering from that crisis. With new variants continuing to evolve, COVID-19 still claims hundreds of lives every day. The pandemic revealed to everyone – particularly employers - the critical role that early childhood care plays in our economy. The pandemic also elevated the fact of decades-long underinvestment in early childhood to the national spotlight. This current reality is daunting. Head Start programs across California face significant challenges.

However, Head Start has 50+ years of experience in overcoming obstacles. This community has always stepped up to meet the challenges of the day. We've navigated difficult times before. What better time than right now to let our decades of experience shine most brightly. Why should this not be our finest hour?

Since May 2022, the HSC board of directors has been engaged in a strategic planning process to strengthen the association's capacity to expand the support it provides to Head Start programs. We are committed to working with all Head Start programs to collectively navigate our way to a future in which the mission of serving families and children in need is recognized for its value, and funded for success. The passion for the mission remains.

I hope you will join us on this journey.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jodie Keller".

Jodie Keller, Board President, Head Start California



## HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION

Originally incorporated as California Head Start Association in May 1995 as a 501c3 nonprofit, the association was created to unify the voice of Head Start grantees in California. The board is elected regionally by the membership. The first executive director was hired in 2000. The third and current executive director was hired in summer 2016. The association re-branded in January 2019, coinciding with the launch of a new website.

The board revised its bylaws in October 2019 to improve HSC's governance structure and the association filed Restated Articles of

Incorporation with the California Secretary of State in February 2021, changing our legal name to Head Start California. Membership has grown over the last six years to include 124 agencies - approximately 80% of grantees.



Original association logo (left). New rebranded logo as of 2019 (right)



The association navigated the COVID-19 pandemic well, successfully pivoting to online conferences. HSC continues to offer three signature conferences each year, and in 2022 launched two new events: the Head Start to the Capital Advocacy Day, and Leadership & Wellness Symposium. The association's reserves have grown, and the board has established financial reserves and investment policies to ensure their growth.

## STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR HEAD START

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Head Start Programs are facing four inter-related challenges that are dramatically impacting their ability to serve Head Start-eligible children and families.

- **Workforce / Staffing Crisis.** The early childhood education workforce is in a nationwide crisis. There are simply not enough teachers to fill the need, and too few college students studying early childhood development.
- **Insufficient Federal funding for Head Start.** Federal funding has not kept pace with the increasing requirements for Head Start teachers. Many programs have empty classrooms because they're unable to recruit and retain staff at the current wage level.
- **CA's rising minimum wage.** Low wages relative to California's economy and rising minimum wage are compounding an already difficult workforce landscape. At the same time, increasing minimum wages are making it increasingly difficult to find income-eligible families.
- **CA's TK / UPK expansion.** California's expansion of transitional kindergarten over the next four years will exacerbate both the teacher recruitment challenge as well as create competition for serving 4-year-olds.

## STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR HEAD START CALIFORNIA

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While the association has a strong staff and dedicated board leadership, they both recognize that key barriers must be addressed to ensure that strength continues.

- There is growing competition for conferences and training. Both within the Head Start community at the regional and national level, as well as among other non-Head Start early childhood stakeholders, the number of ECE trainings has dramatically increased. The 'pandemic pivot' to online content effectively removed geographic limits on conference attendance resulting in more training opportunities.
- HSC's revenue model has been supported by too few income sources and has relied significantly upon conference activity.
- The employment landscape has shifted dramatically, and inflation is creating an upward pressure on wages, which will impact recruitment and retention.
- Limited integration among HSC's software tools limits our ability to increase technological efficiency and focus staff time on member services and engagement.

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

*Vision, Mission and Values of Head Start California*



## VISION

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We envision a future where Head Start is recognized as the gold standard in child development and the provider of choice for California's most vulnerable children and families.

## MISSION

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We empower Head Start programs to reach their full potential through advocacy, professional development, networking, and collaboration.

## VALUES

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### Inclusion *"Everyone is welcome"*

We value diversity and engage people of all backgrounds and abilities as we strive for a more equitable society.

### Ethical Behavior *"Do the right thing"*

We create and sustain relationships built on trust, moral courage, respect, and accountability.

### Innovation *"Creativity reigns"*

We embrace the change around us and inspire one another to innovate our way forward.

### Teamwork *"Better together"*

We value the spirit in individual thinking and believe in the power of collaboration to accelerate our success.

## THE STRATEGIC GOALS

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Head Start is funded to support a justly compensated workforce.



Head Start has wider recognition in California among families with young children and the emerging workforce.



All Head Start staff have access to training they need to succeed.



Head Start California generates income from a balance of revenue sources.



Head Start California attracts and retains a professional staff and board leadership that will advance our mission and secure our future.

# STRATEGIC PILLARS

To bring its vision to life, Head Start California has identified five strategic pillars to coordinate our efforts to summon the future.

## 5) Build Internal Capacity

We will adapt to California's shifting workforce landscape by building the internal capacity of the association. HSC will establish attractive wages and benefits to retain highly qualified staff, expand board membership diversity and talent, and maximize our technology to "automate, integrate and accelerate" our work.

## 4) Increase & Diversify Revenue

HSC will ensure its long-term financial stability by restructuring its funding model. We will reduce reliance on member dues and conference revenue by establishing more philanthropic support, creating new fee-for-services that help Head Start grant recipients improve operational efficiency and effectiveness, and securing contracts that leverage the skill and ability of association staff.

## 1) Raise Awareness About Head Start

HSC will collaborate with partners that prioritize the health and well-being of children aged 0-5, including state agencies, non-governmental organizations, non-profits and philanthropies, who will help share the Head Start story to future families and early childhood professionals.

## 2) Mobilize the Network

Ours is the largest state Head Start community in the country. HSC will ignite this vast network by coordinating Head Start representation on policy and funding matters that impact Head Start's mission. We will be "one voice - at many tables."

## 3) Diversify Training

HSC will create more training opportunities available in a variety of venues to make training accessible and convenient, and provide all Head Start staff training they need to succeed and grow. HSC will expand and diversify its professional development offerings, driven by member input and in partnership with other training organizations.

### Strategic Pillars





## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

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### Join a board committee.

Serving on a committee of HSC's board of directors is a great way for Head Start professionals to support their colleagues, strengthen their association, and expand their professional network.

### Engage fully with your cluster.

By strengthening our connections with each other at the local level, we can build a stronger statewide network of Head Start community. contributing to the bigger conversations that impact your world.

### Respond to calls to action.

With the largest state Head Start community in the country, our association is uniquely positioned to impact state and federal policy. Being "one voice at many tables" will be achieved through the strategy of "many hands make light work." We need everyone to respond to calls to action to demonstrate to our elected representatives that Head Start is a critically important service to vulnerable families and a strong solution to many of the challenges that we face.