

January 12, 2015

RE: Letter of Reference for Heidi Kolbe and Company, Inc.

The purpose of this letter is to recommend Heidi Kolbe as a facilitator and to outline some of the professional services she has provided. Heidi is a highly skilled process expert who is professional, results-oriented and easy to work with.

The First 5 Placer Children's and Families Commission (First 5 Placer) has maintained an on-going contract for on-call facilitation services with Heidi Kolbe and Company, Inc. for the past 11 years. Ms. Kolbe has assisted us in countless ways in building consensus and, at times, helping us to work through controversial situations. She had facilitated many public meetings, Commission retreats, learning conversations and funding decision making meetings. We are currently working with her to develop our fifth strategic plan.

More specifically, here is an outline of the Kolbe services provided for First 5 Placer:

Strategic Plan Development— Since 2003, Heidi has provided consulting and facilitation services to First 5 to develop four strategic plans. She was responsible for developing the strategic plan approach for each plan. She facilitated a team consisting of representatives of the Commission, advisory committee members, agency partners and First 5 staff. The process she designed and facilitated with these teams resulted in:

- Team analysis of data that was gathered in facilitated public meetings held throughout Placer County and incorporated into the plan;
- Development of the strategic plan goals and strategic results areas;
- Consensus on strategies on how the plan is sustained, monitored and implemented;
- Written plans available on our web site.

Heidi facilitated the **strategic plan implementation** process. Once the strategic plan was completed, First 5 contracted with Heidi to design and implement Request for Results process as an alternative to traditional Request for Proposal process. As part of our policy on transparency, she designed and facilitated grant application process using open community forums where all grantee representatives and interested community members were in the room for the application review and participated in awards processes. This required design and facilitation of the decision making process with the First 5 Commission and Advisory Board - including reviewing details of how funds would be invested to support the First 5 mission in Placer. Heidi directed this process for each funding cycle which included:

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- Review of approximately 25-40 applications for funding from community organizations, agencies and individuals interested in providing services to support the First 5 mission and strategic results;
- Facilitating large public meetings with all applicants, stakeholders, the First 5 Commission and Advisory Board to clarify applications, negotiate services and funding levels;
- Priority setting, budgeting and allocating funding to approximately 25-35 partners consisting of the distribution of approximately several million dollars annually.

Commission retreats and other priority meetings are facilitated by Heidi and her team on an on-call basis. In the past few years, she has facilitated meetings on many topics such as post-partum depression, nutrition and obesity prevention. She facilitates the development of strategic plans with First 5 partners as required. Meetings facilitated by Heidi are always successful; she keeps groups on task and moving toward satisfaction of intended objectives. Her knowledge of the art of facilitation and communication is broad, and she has many strategies for achieving goals in efficient ways.

Program monitoring and implementation evaluation - Heidi designed the First 5 learning conversation evaluation model, which has evolved over time from individual to group conversations. This process of monitoring grantees using their outcomes, strategies and performance data also resulted in fostering collaboration with partners and First 5. A Return on Investment (ROI) study indicated that for each \$1 invested in the evaluation model designed by Heidi, \$6.55 was returned to the system in cost savings and increased collaboration. She has designed and facilitated group learning conversations with multiple partners, mentoring sessions and individual learning conversation to evaluate grantee progress toward outcomes. Heidi also recruited, trained and coached a team of facilitation and recorders to ensure the team had the skills and tools to play a key part in the monitoring of the partner's implementation of results of the First 5 investments.

We have the greatest confidence in Heidi's skills as a facilitator and consultant, and we recommend her to work with your organization. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. jleroux@placercoe.k12.ca.us or 530-745-1304

Sincerely,



Janice LeRoux
Executive Director, First 5 Placer