



First 5 Forever

Family literacy initiative for
Queensland

2016 evaluation

First 5 Forever 2016 evaluation

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First 5 Forever is a family literacy initiative delivered by public libraries with the primary aim of providing strong early literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5. The initiative is coordinated by State Library of Queensland (SLQ) and delivered in partnership with local councils, the network of over 320 Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres plus government and non-government agencies.

The 2016 evaluation highlights growing momentum across the network, with this report summarising key achievements, success factors and recommendations for future years.



Executive summary

The fundamental finding from the data and evidence collected from 2016 indicates that First 5 Forever has **continued to deliver on all key outputs** outlined in the original funding bid.

The 2016 evaluation of First 5 Forever has revealed **growing statewide momentum** and support for the initiative throughout the library network, across local communities, and among families and caregivers of children aged 0–5.

The findings from the 2016 evaluation demonstrate strong progress towards the goal of First 5 Forever becoming an established, universal initiative delivered by the Queensland public library network.

Libraries across Queensland have been activated through First 5 Forever funding, with increased resources and capability to expand quality, capacity and reach of early literacy programs.

Evidence supports First 5 Forever successfully achieving its goal of improving quality, with interviewed parents clearly retaining and actively applying key messages in support of early literacy within the home.

A greater number of First 5 Forever toolkits and resources were purchased for distribution in 2016 compared to 2015, and data collected from interviewed parents endorses their carefully selected content and resources, with compelling qualitative evidence demonstrating that the toolkits are positively impacting literacy activities in and around the home.

2016 was marked by a significant increase in marketing activity at a local and state level; an enhanced web presence for the initiative and signs of growing and powerful word of mouth. Marketing is a priority area for many libraries in 2017 and there is appetite for increasing skills and capacity in this area.

In 2016, councils engaged with 565 partner organisations relating to children aged 0–5, with an increasing number formed as a direct result of First 5 Forever. Involvement in reference groups was more widespread in 2016 and 18 new groups have been formed through First 5 Forever activity.

There is strong buy-in from external partners who see a clear value in the initiative and aspire towards sustaining relationships.

In 2016 professional development participants experienced strong outcomes as a result of attending First 5 Forever workshops, from increased confidence and knowledge through to inspiration from collaborating with peers. The value of the sessions mean that demand may outstrip supply so increased access and a sustainable model of continued professional development is a key focus for State Library moving forward.

As demonstrated in this summary, State Library has achieved success in the statewide delivery of First 5 Forever. Councils participating in First 5 Forever have the potential to reach 97% of the Queensland population. The 2016 evaluation results highlight both increasing momentum and a continuous improvement model that has allowed State Library to respond and adapt to emerging findings, and provide a clear pathway to a sustainable model for the initiative.

Key achievements in 2016 at a glance:

\$4.5m

Funding and support made available to 72 councils

97%

Of Queensland's population covered by participating councils

452,200

Attendances at in-library First 5 Forever activities

8,000

Estimated number of First 5 Forever outreach events in 2016 compared to 1,100 in 2015

87,400

Estimated number of attendances at outreach events in 2016

42

Participating councils reported programming First 5 Forever outreach activity compared to 30 in 2015

25,700

Toolkits purchased for distribution in 2016, 35% more than in 2015

565

Partner organisations and agencies engaged with First 5 Forever in 2016

73%

Of these partnerships a direct result of First 5 Forever

3,489 followers

In 4 months following the launch of the Facebook page in July 2016

\$207k

Value (in advertising space rate) of published media articles mentioning First 5 Forever

20

Workshops in 14 different locations across the state including the introduction of a new workshop specifically for library staff

673

Participants engaged in professional development workshops

134

Agencies, organisations and workplaces engaged in professional development workshops

Collated evidence of First 5 Forever data against core deliverables in 2016

Core deliverable		2014	2015	2016	Key stats
Increasing access to early literacy experiences	No. of councils programming sessions for 0–5 year olds and caregivers*	37	40	47	47 of the 49 participating councils reported programming sessions for 0–5s and caregivers in 2016 compared to 40 in 2015 and 37 pre-First 5 Forever launch in 2014. 21,500 in-library First 5 Forever sessions took place engaging 452,000 participants.
	No. of in-library First 5 Forever sessions*	14.1k	17.4k	21.5k	
	No. of attendances to in-library sessions*	404k	444.6k	452.2k	
Reaching all families with children under 5	No. of councils purchasing First 5 Forever toolkits and resources	N/A	47	39	39 councils purchased First 5 Forever resources in 2016, including 25,700 toolkits (a 35% increase on the number purchased in 2015).
	No. of toolkits purchased for distribution	N/A	19k	25.7k	
	No. of outreach events*	0.3k	1.1k	8k	Outreach activity has grown exponentially. An estimated 8,000 events took place, around 30 times more than pre-First 5 Forever in 2014. These events engaged an estimated 87,400 people, more than six times the number in 2014.
	No. of attendances at outreach events*	13.1k	38.5k	87.4k	
Collaborative partnerships and coordination	No. of community partners engaged*	N/A	625	565	Participation in reference groups increased in 2016, with two-thirds of councils involved in at least one. Around one-quarter of these groups were established as a direct result of First 5 Forever. 565 community partners were engaged by libraries through 2016 program delivery with nearly three-quarters (73%) new partnerships since First 5 Forever began.
	% of partnerships a direct result of First 5 Forever*	N/A	60%	73%	
	No. of councils participating in a reference group*	N/A	19	32	
Family and community awareness campaign	No. of sessions on First 5 Forever website	N/A	N/A	39.2k	The value (in advertising space rate) of published media articles mentioning First 5 Forever equated to \$207,200 between December 2015 and November 2016. Over the reporting period, 39,200 sessions took place on the First 5 Forever website, engaging 29,600 users who made 77,500 page views.
	Value of published media articles	N/A	N/A	\$207k	
	No. of Facebook impressions	N/A	N/A	983k	Between its launch in July 2016 and December 2016, the First 5 Forever Facebook page achieved 3,489 fans, 7,478 engagements, 5,424 click-throughs and over 983k impressions.

Core deliverable		2014	2015	2016	Key stats
Workforce capability and standards	No. of participants in State Library professional development sessions	N/A	617	673	In 2016, the First 5 Forever team provided workshops to 673 participants delivered through 20 workshops in 14 locations across the state. This year, State Library also provided two forums and two webinars to 67 participants.
	No. of workshops delivered by SLQ staff	N/A	17	20	
	No. of workshop locations	N/A	13	14	
Backbone organisation	Amount of First 5 Forever funding made available to councils	N/A	\$4.5m	\$4.5m	<p>\$4.5m of funding and support made available to 72 councils in 2016. Of these, 51 councils and 9 IKCs received funding, representing 97% of the Queensland population. 49 out of 51 participating councils (excluding IKCs) returned acquittal reports within reporting deadlines in 2016.</p> <p>State Library continued implementing data capture tools used at workshops and professional development sessions, receiving over 644 completed surveys by participants. .</p>
	No. of participating councils and IKCs	N/A	56	59	

*Based on councils who supplied data each reporting year. No weighting is applied to account for 2015 being a 10-month period. Please note this year we have compared the total number of professional development participants at workshops, forums and webinars. The 2015 Evaluation Report references the number of participants at workshops only (569).

Key recommendations

Core deliverable	Key recommendations
Increasing access to early literacy experiences	Support public libraries to address the need for more parent resources. Allow for quantitative data capture and research in future evaluation phases in order to quantify the impact on participating parents, caregivers and their children.
Reaching all families with children 0-5	Progress plans for making toolkits more flexible to further encourage councils to adapt the resources to suit local community needs. Acknowledge the extent of new ground made across the network when it comes to outreach activity which will help feed the momentum of the initiative.
Collaborative partnerships and coordination	Provide increased guidance across the network on initiating and sustaining partnerships and how reference groups can assist in this process. State Library to continue its advocacy role, engaging senior-level stakeholders to help further roll-out partnership opportunities.
Family and community awareness campaign	Consider integrating more practical 'marketing 101' formats into training offered by State Library. Share examples of best practice where libraries are using central First 5 Forever content to develop in-house and localised resources Encourage even more advocacy among parents, caregivers and the wider community.
Workforce capability and standards	Consider formalising peer-to-peer training strategies through 'train the trainer' sessions. Ensure 'learning by doing' remains a key feature within sessions, alongside theoretical foundations and opportunities to network. Maximise access to professional development and consider a modular approach, giving more flexibility for taking part.
Backbone organisation and collective impact initiative	Consider offering more guidance in relation to staffing First 5 Forever programs to ensure a sustainable delivery model. This guidance will need to consider multiple contexts, particularly population density and remoteness. Provide more notice to councils about required acquittal data and encourage systematic record-keeping throughout the year. Encourage a greater level of knowledge sharing across the network.

Key terms used throughout this document

Baby Time sessions¹

Sessions for babies aged 0–12 months and their families / caregivers. These sessions focus on engagement with simple rhymes, songs and books.

Collective Impact

Collective Impact is a framework for facilitating and achieving large scale social change. It is a structured approach for bringing cross-sector organisations together to focus on a common agenda that results in long-lasting change.

Early literacy

Early (emergent) literacy refers to the knowledge and skills developed in real life settings through engagement with literacy materials and people. It is the precursor to later reading and writing².

Evaluation Framework

The Evaluation Framework is included in the appendix and articulates the initiative's rationale, goals, inputs, outputs, monitoring and review.

Independent Libraries

Queensland public libraries where overall funding and operation is provided by the local council with assistance provided by State Library in the form of

a cash grant, advisory and training services and provision of some centralised collections.

Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs)

Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) are similar to libraries and have an emphasis on programs that encourage the capture and retention of traditional knowledge, culture and languages. IKCs are owned and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Shire Councils. Councils are responsible for the physical infrastructure, staffing and day to day operations of their IKC. State Library provides financial support, guidance and assistance.

Library Board

The Library Board of Queensland, the governing body of the State Library of Queensland which draws its power from the Libraries Act 1988, and whose Chairperson is a signatory to this Agreement.

Reference groups

A group of individuals and representatives from organisations that work collectively to support and prioritise an agreed agenda in their local community.

Rhyme Time sessions¹

Sessions primarily for children aged from approximately 2–4 years and their families / caregivers. These sessions focus on engagement with simple rhymes, songs and books.

Rural Libraries Queensland (RLQ)

Queensland public libraries that service councils with populations under 15,000 where library stock and limited cash subsidies are provided by State Library, in lieu of the standard per capita grant provided to Independent Libraries.

Service Level Agreement

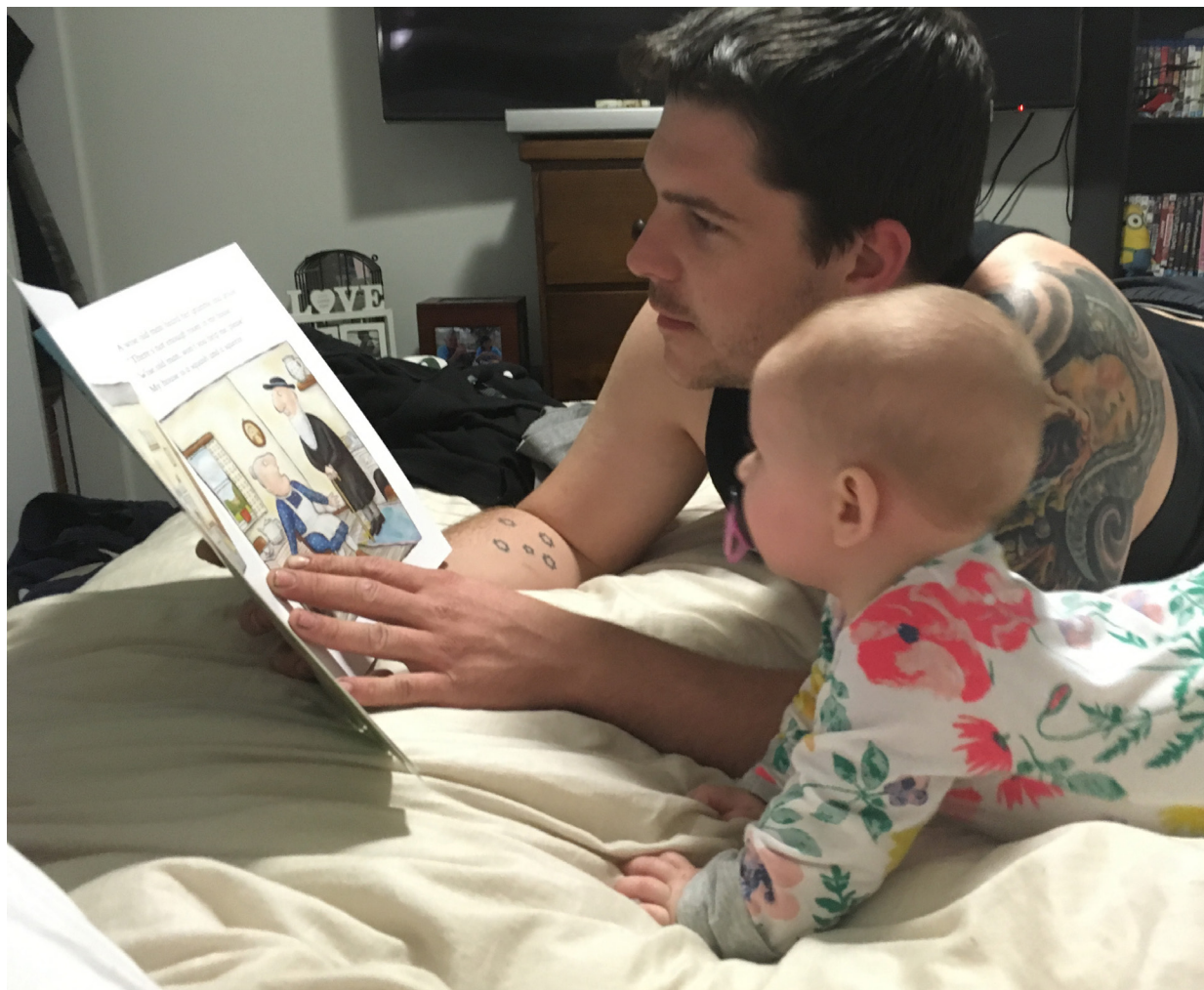
A signed contract between the Library Board of Queensland and individual local councils that defines obligations and requirements in relation to specific grant funding allocations.

Story Time sessions¹

Sessions for children aged 2–5 years and their families / caregivers, include a shared story and may be combined with a related activity or a second story on a related theme.

¹ Session names vary across councils

² Further information on definitions for emergent literacy are available within the following documents: Let's Read Literature Review (2013): www.letsread.com.au/getmedia/a5313369-d89b-4e11-931f-6cbe7588903e/2013-Let-s-Read-Literature-Review.pdf.aspx; Literacy Promotion Practice Resource, Centre for Community Child Health (2006): www.letsread.com.au/getmedia/b6ffabd8-5c3e-4618-b121-bce8b5993d4b/LiteracyPromotionPracticeResource.pdf.aspx; Zero to three: www.zerotothree.org.



Introduction

First 5 Forever is a family literacy initiative delivered by **public libraries** with the primary aim of providing **strong early literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5** years.

First 5 Forever in 2016 – the second year

What is First 5 Forever?

First 5 Forever is a \$20 million initiative, led by State Library and delivered in partnership with the network of more than 320 Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs).

The objective of First 5 Forever is to strengthen and enable the various platforms and community-level factors that will directly reach and impact on early literacy outcomes for children from birth to five years and their families.

First 5 Forever connects children and families to the information, resources and support they need to bring about positive behavioural change for early language and literacy. First 5 Forever is

seeking to bring about long-term, positive change to address Queensland's under-performance in children's literacy through providing universal access and consistent quality, services, messages and resources. This will be achieved by collaborating with the local councils through the public library network and harnessing the collective impact and reach of partnering with multiple cross-sector agencies to work directly with parents and caregivers of children under five.

Why First 5 Forever in Queensland?

In 2012, The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data indicated that a significant number of Queensland children start school weak in the language and cognitive domain and that 26.2% of Queensland children in their first year of school were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains. In 2015 this only improved slightly with 26.1% of Queensland children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on one or more developmental domains – one being language and cognitive skills. This compares to 22.0% across Australia as a whole, with Queensland ranking sixth behind other states.

Queensland has a significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and a higher proportion

of children living in remote communities compared to the Australian average. According to the AEDC, in the language and cognitive domain, Indigenous children in 2015 were nearly four times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable, and children living in Very Remote Australia were 4.8 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable¹.

Why Public Libraries?

'Public libraries are the only government agency available to children from babyhood, providing year-round, free access to resources and services that support reading and literacy.' Early Literacy Framework and Strategy for Australian Public Libraries ALIA

Public libraries in Queensland form a large active network with a statewide reach that includes metropolitan, rural, remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Libraries are safe and inclusive spaces where children and families can utilise a range of informal learning opportunities to explore, learn and expand their knowledge.

Queensland public libraries are a major provider of free programs, activities and resources for children and families. These library programs offer a unique opportunity to create welcoming and supportive environments for parents and caregivers of young children and enhance the connection between the parent and their child and other families, while providing social and informal learning opportunities.

With over 320 public libraries and IKCs across Queensland, libraries are ideally placed to deliver the local connection necessary for this proactive partnered initiative.

Methodology model

First 5 Forever is aimed at all Queensland children 0-5, their families and caregivers and recognises that it is only through partnerships and networks that consistent, quality messages and resources will be universally accessible.

By collaborating with the library network and harnessing the collective impact of partnering with multiple cross-sector agencies to work directly with parents and caregivers, First 5 Forever is seeking to bring about positive change to address

Queensland's under-performance in children's literacy.

The initiative employs a population-based cash grant methodology with weightings for demographics of 0-5s. Disadvantage and distance is managed via a Service Level Agreement between State Library and Local Government.

First 5 Forever strategies

Aligning with international, national and state strategic frameworks

In the development phase of First 5 Forever, various national policies and frameworks for the early years in respect of children, families and community development were reviewed.

These frameworks include:

- Early Literacy Framework and Strategy for Australian Public Libraries
- Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- Queensland Libraries Act 1988
- National Framework for Universal Child and Family Health Services

- Queensland Universal Child Health Framework
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As the initiative develops, the First 5 Forever team continues to reference and align with contemporary and emerging strategies, frameworks and research.

Evaluating First 5 Forever

First 5 Forever is being evaluated through a range of methods involving consultation with councils, partner agencies, front line library staff and parents. Evidence is being captured to demonstrate how the initiative is performing against its core objectives, key performance indicators and to inform a process of continuous improvement with findings from each year's evaluation informing the initiative's onward implementation.

Please see the Evaluation Framework, which forms an appendix to this report, for further information.

¹ Department of Education and Training. (2016). Australian Early Development Census National Report 2015, page 14. Available online: <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/2015-aedc-national-report>

Increasing access to early literacy experiences

Libraries across Queensland have been **activated through First 5 Forever funding**, with increased resources and capability to provide more early literacy programs. In 2016, 47 of participating councils reported programming for 0-5s, compared to 40 in 2015.

Over 21k First 5 Forever in-library sessions took place across the library network in 2016. These sessions engaged an estimated 452k children and their families, 11% more than pre-implementation.

Evidence supports First 5 Forever successfully achieving its goal of improving quality with **interviewed parents** clearly **retaining and actively applying key messages** in support of early literacy.

Aim and outcomes

Queensland libraries are the major provider of free programs, activities and resources for children and families. These library programs offer a unique opportunity to create welcoming and supportive environments for parents and caregivers of young children and enhance the connection between the parent and their child and other families, while providing social and informal learning opportunities.

A key deliverable of First 5 Forever is increasing access to public programs in libraries through Baby Time, Rhyme Time and Story Time sessions, with libraries being activated to increase quality, capacity and reach.

Evidence of impact towards increasing access

21,500

First 5 Forever in-library sessions took place in 2016 across 49 councils providing data

452,200

Estimated number of attendances to in-library First 5 Forever activities in 2016

47

Participating councils reported programming for 0-5s in libraries, compared to 40 in 2015

Please note that data supplied for participants and number of in-library sessions for 0-5 aged children may be under reported due to variation of local implementation of these programs. For this reason, year-on-year comparisons may be subject to alterations in future evaluation reports. Please also note that only the 49 councils submitting data are represented in figures.

There were an estimated 21,500 in-library sessions for children 5 and under and their families in 2016. This represents an estimated increase of 3% on the First 5 Forever result for 2015. Please see the note on page 14 for further information about how estimated percentage changes are derived.

In total there were an estimated 452,200 attendances to in-library First 5 Forever activities

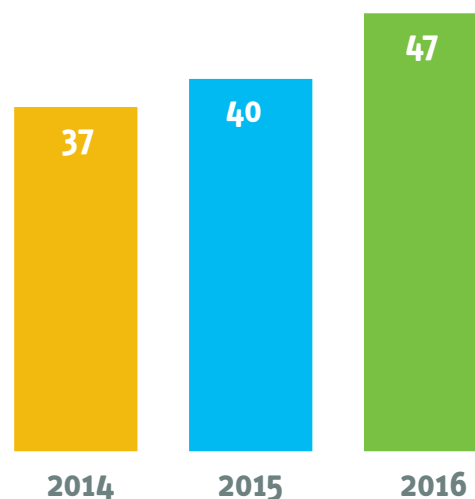
in 2016, an increase of 11% compared to pre-First 5 Forever activity in 2014. The results for 2016 show an estimated decrease of 16% compared to 2015 data, revealing a trend of smaller average audience size per session (estimated to be 29 in 2014, 26 in 2015 down to 21 in 2016). This is to be expected as libraries have programmed a greater number of events, giving families more choice and flexibility on when to attend.

‘[They do sessions] on Saturday ... I think it’s awesome because even though a child might go to childcare five days a week and Mum and Dad both work five days a week, they will have that opportunity to access that sort of program ... and have that 1-on-1 interaction with each other, instead of always just being busy, busy, busy.’
Parent interview

Libraries activated by First 5 Forever programming throughout Queensland

In 2016, 47 councils submitted evidence of programming early literacy sessions for children aged 0–5 and their families compared to 40 in 2015, First 5 Forever’s implementation year.

No. of councils submitting evidence of programming early literacy sessions 5s and under



Rolling First 5 Forever out to IKCs

Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) are part of the network of public libraries across Queensland. IKCs are owned and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island councils. State Library contributes financial support to these councils to assist with the operational costs of IKCs across Queensland. State Library also collaborates closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island councils to provide guidance and assistance on programs, activities and events delivered through IKCs.

State Library commenced planning the local implementation of First 5 Forever in IKCs in 2015. At the Indigenous Knowledge Centre Coordinators Conference held in Cairns in October 2015, First 5 Forever professional development was held for IKC Coordinators, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island councils and community partners. First 5 Forever grant funding was incorporated into the revised Service Level Agreement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Councils in 2016.

Nine Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island councils collectively received \$32k funding in 2016 to deliver First 5 Forever through IKCs located at: Cherbourg, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Palm Island, Northern Peninsula Area Council, Torres Strait Island Regional Council, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah.

The IKCs will report on First 5 Forever following the end of financial year 2016/17. As such, this evidence will not be included within the 2016 evaluation, but will be referenced in future evaluation phases.

The tables to the right and graphs overleaf highlight that session provision increased at varying rates across different session types.

Please note that in order to accurately estimate change in provision for the initiative as a whole, weighting has been applied when calculating changes in session and participation numbers to account for 2015 being a 10-month period (compared to a 12-month period for 2014 and 2016) and to account for slight inconsistencies in councils providing data year-on-year. This data only represents the 44 councils that provided data consistently each year. This means, for example, that the totals for 2016 represented here are lower than those represented previously which include all 49 councils supplying data in 2016.

- Since 2014 (pre-First 5 Forever), 'other' 0-5 sessions have grown at a greater rate than other session types both in terms of provision and attendance. Nevertheless, 'other' sessions represent the smallest level of activity at just 10% of all First 5 Forever sessions in 2016.
- Rhyme Time sessions saw the second steepest growth rate since First 5 Forever began, rising by 119% when 2016 data is compared to 2014.

Number of in-library First 5 Forever sessions and estimated yearly change

	2014 (pre-First 5 Forever)	2015	2016	% change 2016 vs 2015	% change 2016 vs 2014
Baby Time	3.5k	4.6k	4.1k	-11%	16%
Story Time	7.7k	10.3k	10.1k	-2%	31%
Rhyme Time	2.3	4.6k	5.1k	13%	119%
Other 0-5 session	0.6k	1.3k	2.1k	54%	262%
Total	14.1k	20.8k	21.3k	3%	52%

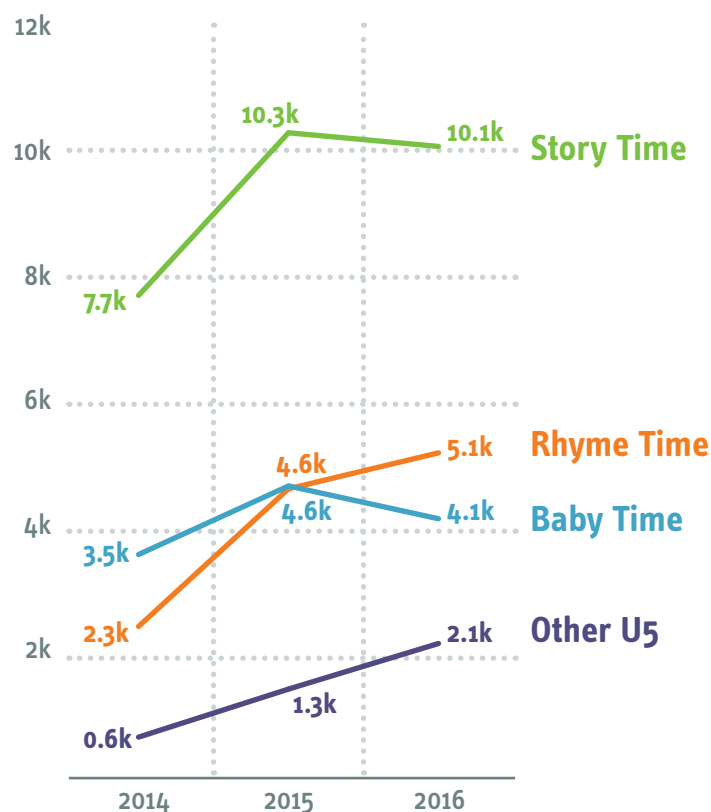
[Base: Only includes data from councils where three years' worth of data was supplied]

Number of in-library First 5 Forever attendances and estimated yearly change

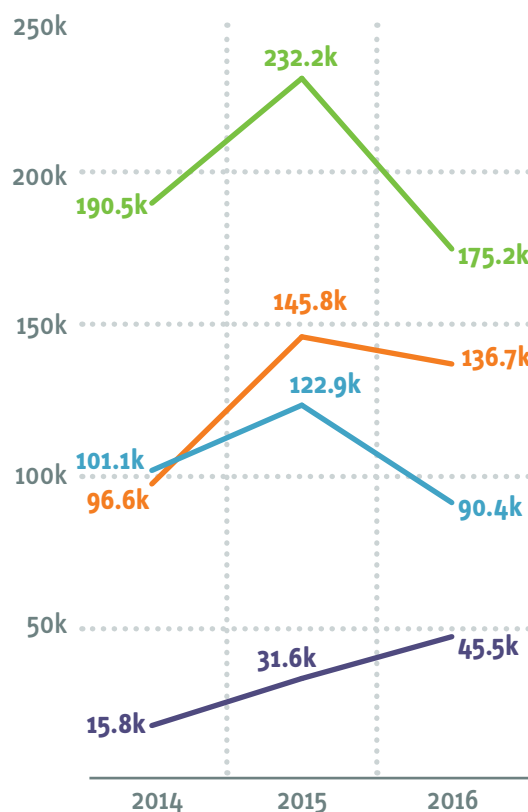
	2014 (pre-First 5 Forever)	2015	2016	% change 2016 vs 2015	% change 2016 vs 2014
Baby Time	101.1k	122.9k	90.4k	-27%	-11%
Story Time	190.5k	232.2k	175.2k	-25%	-8%
Rhyme Time	96.6k	145.8k	136.7k	-6%	42%
Other 0-5 session	15.8k	31.6k	45.5k	44%	188%
Total	404.0k	532.5k	447.8k	-16%	11%

[Base: Only includes data from councils where three years' worth of data was supplied]

No. of First 5 Forever in-library 5s and under sessions



No. of First 5 Forever attendees at 5 and under sessions



- Although Baby Time and Story Time sessions have seen overall growth in provision since First 5 Forever launched, there were decreases in the number of sessions in 2016 compared to 2015. Despite this, Story Time represented nearly half of First 5 Forever sessions in 2016 (47%).
- Actual attendance at Baby Time and Story Time sessions was estimated to be lower in 2016 compared to pre-First 5 Forever, despite session provision being higher. This finding was most pronounced for Baby Time sessions, with participants down by 11% when 2016 data is compared to 2014.
- Conversely, there has been overall growth in attendance at Rhyme Time sessions, with participant levels in 2016 up by 42% compared to 2014, although data for 2016 registers a slight decrease of 6% compared to First 5 Forever's implementation year in 2015.

'I know Paige looks forward to Rhyme Time every week ... it goes on our calendar and we try to go once or twice a week, so it has been ... really valuable for us.' Parent interview

Increase in reported parent relationships with libraries as a result of First 5 Forever

Parent interviews revealed that engaging with First 5 Forever had, in some instances, a clear influence on increased engagement with, and borrowing from, libraries.

‘[First 5 Forever has] increased ... our literature activities ... because part of getting that First 5 pack was to sign him up for his own library card and I had never bothered borrowing library books, but we do that now.’ Parent interview

‘We ... pretty much take all of Wednesdays for library ... we go there early. We turn up, look at more books, do Baby Time and then we do morning tea, have Toddler Time and then maybe a colouring activity.’ Parent interview

‘I like that they’re in different sessions for the different age groups and I like that ... there are different types of sessions even for the same age groups ... some sessions that would have the craft activities and then others that would, you know, just be more the songs and stories. Yeah I think that the variety is really good.’ Parent interview

One parent described staff proactively encouraging parents and caregivers to loan relevant items once they had taken part in a First 5 Forever session.

‘They have just started introducing at the end of the session now, here are some books that the staff here in the library have got if you are interested in borrowing yourself, so that is really great.’ Parent interview

Parents want even more options for attending

When asked what could be improved about First 5 Forever, the most common suggestion put forward by parents and caregivers related to the timings and regularity of the sessions. Some commented that offering more options to fit into different routines would be helpful and one parent suggested more regular programming at their local library would increase impact.

‘Some of the sessions were close to nap times which made it a bit harder and it might have been a bit better after school drop-off for people maybe a little bit earlier and 10:30 was getting close to nap time.’ Parent interview

‘Maybe having a bit more variation in the times of the sessions ... you know if the baby sessions are at 9:30 in the morning, but I would think that most babies that are old enough to engage with that program would be having a morning nap around that time ... maybe more variety, you know, week-to-week in the timing of the sessions. So it doesn’t always clash with routines.’ Parent interview

‘I think if we went every week it would have a greater impact ... I don’t think the classes are on every week, I think it is every two or three weeks. I think if they did a month programming for it, it would be better, but I still think it is really positive because obviously ... he is learning new things ... I am learning new things to do with him.’ Parent interview

In-library sessions are clearly a successful vehicle for delivering key First 5 Forever messages

A key deliverable of First 5 Forever is not only to offer more provision but to improve the quality of current and future library programs through enhancing workforce capability. This strategy recognises that libraries interface directly with families in the early years and have the important and unique role of communicating realistic and practical messages and linking library programs and activities to what families can do at home.

Further evidence demonstrating First 5 Forever's impact in improving quality is presented in depth in the *Workforce capability & standards* chapter.

Parents are understanding the theory underpinning the initiative

There is strong evidence to support the idea that First 5 Forever is effective in communicating to parents the reasons why different strategies help to support children's literacy. Several parents mentioned First 5 Forever staff delivering such messages during in-library sessions.

'[At] Rhyme Time ... they say it kind of every time you go ... to make sure that your child is looking at you ... unless we are really making eye contact making sure that she is watching your mouth ... she may not be actually that engaged and that has really made us think about the way we communicate with her.' Parent interview

'When [the staff are] doing activities, they're explaining 'OK hold your baby this way', 'do this with your baby', because this encourages this with your baby ... that's ... important ... to make sure that they keep doing. So that parents realise OK, we're not just playing a fun game here, there is some neat stuff.' Parent interview

Building parent and caregiver confidence

Parents and caregivers clearly appreciate the new knowledge that supports their role of being their child's first educator.

'What I loved about it ... with my own children which was so long ago, Josephine is 28/29 and so she was my last baby, I don't think we actually did a lot of that, you know, making the eye contact and all of that stuff, so it is really good to have that reaffirmed.' Grandparent interview

Some parents described increased confidence in facilitating literacy activities as a result of taking part.

'I've picked up how to ... take it further. Like, I used to always read to him with him sitting, because he liked to be in my arm, but I noticed one of the things is sitting face-to-face so he can actually see my expression ... I've learnt to ... just be more conscious of it, to be able to take it a bit further, which makes me feel a bit more like I'm doing a better job.' Parent interview

'The biggest impact for me has been on my confidence in parenting, well, in reading as a part of parenting ... it was the first thing that I'd ever seen that let me know that it was okay to just enjoy what we were doing and not focus so much on the end goal ... 90% of that confidence in guiding her [in ongoing literacy activity] ... has been through the First 5 Forever program' Parent interview

Positively influencing behaviour in the home

Some interviewees presented compelling evidence that engaging with First 5 Forever has translated into parents spending more time doing literacy activities with their children day-to-day.

Other interviewees described already being predisposed to facilitating literacy activities, and that rather than increase levels of activity, First 5 Forever reaffirms and motivates them to continue what they are doing.

‘[The First 5 Forever literature] stated how important for the growth and imagination and everything like that ... that then made me go, ‘Phew, we need to read more’, and then I read up online people who were putting books down [at a lower height]. I used to keep books in the cupboard.’ Parent interview

‘We were going to these [sessions] in the morning and then from a child development point of view, it actually stimulates Amelia, and then we have been carrying that theme on for the rest of the day ... Amelia’s like ‘Right well Mummy, I want to now build this and make this’, and it’s totally related.’ Parent interview

‘I just love how they promote just a love of reading, and letting parents know that you can do it anywhere and everywhere. It doesn’t have to be at home ...you can be out and about and still do it, so parents that say that they’re too busy to read ... it’s not really a good excuse ... there’s always a time and a place for it.’ Parent interview

Social benefits for children and parents alike

When asked about the positive impact of participating, one of the most prominent themes within parent interviews was the social benefits. For some, participation allows them to feel part of a community and gives access to a wider support network. Others described the social benefits for children and some focused on the opportunities of quality time and inter-family bonding. The table overleaf evidences these strong social benefits.



Summary of social benefits described by parents and caregivers from participating in First 5 Forever in-library programs

Benefit	Parent Feedback
Providing opportunities to meet other local parents and feel part of the community.	<p>'I think it is very much a community service of bringing women, well mostly women and a lot of grandparents ... bringing them out of the home so it gives them an avenue to ... connect ... I had actually made some friends from that Baby Rhyme Time group who I still keep in contact with.'</p> <p>'The best thing about the program is it brings new parents together in a regional town, it is so amazing for an opportunity to meet new parents and a lot of people have made support networks through that program... I really think the biggest benefit is the networking opportunities for ... new parents because it can be really isolating and overwhelming.'</p> <p>'I just love being a part of it ... we would have been doing it at home by ourselves, but just the fact that the kids can actually go out and socialise at the same time, and we see all the other grandmothers that have to look after their grandchildren ... it gives rather a community sort of feeling and yeah, you don't feel so isolated.'</p> <p>'It has been good for me too, to be around other parents ... it is good to talk to other mothers.'</p>
Socialising and modelling through inter-parent and inter-child interaction.	<p>'He enjoys looking at the other kids and it actually helps him because he watches what other kids do and knows to sit down and watch and stuff ... I think it was good for him that he is learning like manners ... as well.'</p> <p>'She has only just started to interact with other people she has been through a bit of a 'stranger danger phase' ... she definitely loves the singing and actions ... it is not just sitting on the floor, clapping her hands, and singing a song, you know, it's a bit interactive and she always seems to sleep a lot after Rhyme Time.'</p> <p>'Her personality at the moment is showing shy tendencies ... I am a single mum, so I think it is good for her to see me interacting with other parents and other little babies and understanding that there is a social element to life.'</p> <p>'It is a way of getting the kids to socialise before you started anything like daycare ... otherwise we would just be at home ... and it is really good for people who have moved to a place and don't know anyone ... the social aspect is good for both mothers and babies.'</p> <p>'It was a lot of fun ... getting to see how people interact with the kids and all the rest of it was really educational for me, because I had no clue.'</p>
Strengthening child and parent / caregiver relationships and spending quality time together.	<p>'It is an activity that we can get out of the house and do together ... I think that is what I love most about it and the fact that she loves it.'</p> <p>'I think the socialisation ... the modelling is what is good. I can see them teaching the parents how to interact with their child and it is nice to see parents sitting there without their phones in their hands.'</p> <p>'I can see the young mums here that they get, for some you can tell it is just an opportunity to really, really let go with their children with other people around ... letting the child be on the floor ... with the other children and doing that and actually you can be silly if you want to and it doesn't really matter.'</p>

Encouraging a love of reading and related activities

There is clear evidence that parents who provided feedback for the 2016 evaluation understand the importance of literacy skills for their child's development and future.

'You don't have to just entertain with toys, but you can sit there and read a book ... I guess for his development to have that ... love for books as well in the future ... I think it's good for him.' Parent interview

Some parents credited First 5 Forever with helping their child to develop increased interests in literacy activities.

'Even though I tried to sort of get him interested in books from about six months he wasn't, but we started going to Story Time and because they make it fun and there is lots of like bright visuals, I think it has increased his interest for sure.' Parent interview

'He loves singing now. So he used to be really quiet and that DVD, he does all the actions ... so for a kid that doesn't want to talk and is usually grunted for what he wanted ... to sing a whole song was pretty awesome ... it definitely had a positive [impact on him]' Parent interview

Development outcomes that go beyond literacy

As well as literacy and socialisation benefits, another positive outcome described by some parents was improved co-ordination and movement within their children.

'I can definitely see that she enjoys reading and being read to. I think even her hand eye co-ordination has improved by lifting flaps in books and turning the pages ... it has been really good for her in terms of interacting with other kids ... now that she is kind of moving around she doesn't just sit still at Rhyme Time she will go and sit with the other kids and she will sit there and clap and sing the songs and do the actions and I think it has been really, really good for her learning.' Parent interview

'I think that is where she learnt to clap ... we would go to Baby Rhyme Time and sing and you know we would do the actions and then I think about the next day that she ... would clap and I realised it was something that she had learnt there ... I think it encouraged her in a way to move because she was with children of different ages ... oh look at what they are doing. Even bum shuffling or commando crawling ... I think that was probably more powerful for her rather than just being at home doing the tummy time.' Parent interview

An appetite for additional information

Parent interviews presented compelling evidence that some would like First 5 Forever to further the level of information offered. In particular, parents want more specific information on quality book titles and guidance on activity types and length for different ages.

'It might be cool if the First 5 Forever program had a ... recommended reading list of books ... say for babies and then, you know, like a recommended reading list for each age group.' Parent interview

'I'd like book recommendations on particular subjects, like where it's been reviewed ... not necessarily just ones that have won awards ... like if First 5 Forever is getting really involved ... pick a book each month as their book of the month ... ones that are really appropriate for developmental things for kids.' Parent interview

Recommendations

- **Support public libraries to address the need for more parent resources.** Feedback demonstrates a clear understanding of the initiative's core messages among families. Deepening this understanding through specific resources, guidance and advice will help parents take their activity to the next level.
- **Allow for quantitative data capture in future evaluation phases** in order to quantify the impact on participating parents, caregivers and their children.



Reaching all families with children aged 0–5

A greater number of First 5 Forever toolkits and resources were purchased for distribution in 2016 and data collected from interviewed parents endorses the carefully selected content and resources, with **compelling qualitative evidence** demonstrating that the **toolkits are positively impacting on literacy activities** in and around the home.

The initiative has been a **catalyst for a huge increase in outreach activity** in wider communities and this is where councils feel there has been most impact. In 2016, **42 councils reported engaging in some form of outreach activity** relating to early literacy compared to 30 in 2015 and 18 in 2014.



Aim and outcomes

The initiative's outreach strategy supports libraries in developing capability to maximise the existing interface and opportunities that libraries have to connect their programming and resources with families in their local community. Libraries are encouraged to increase their reach through forming partnerships and developing programs that go beyond the libraries' physical buildings to support the universal ambition of the initiative.

First 5 Forever enables libraries to extend outreach via events and the distribution of toolkits and resources. Connecting outreach to the non-user and engaging a wide range of families, including those perceived to be most vulnerable and families from diverse cultural backgrounds, is a key deliverable of First 5 Forever.

The primary strategy for connecting new and existing families to the resources and activities that libraries and their partners can offer is through the provision of toolkits and additional elements. These resources are freely distributed to parents and families through libraries and include items such as a quality age-appropriate book, a hand puppet, a nursery rhyme and story DVD and fridge magnets.

The toolkit and its contents remained consistent in 2015 and 2016, however in 2016 additional elements were available for purchase such as Indigenous context brochures, First 5 Forever stickers, branded balloons and children's t-shirts.

To find out more about First 5 Forever toolkits and elements go to <http://www.plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/children-and-young-people/first-5-forever/parents-and-primary-caregivers-toolkit>

The toolkits were made available to libraries at \$20 each, with no minimum or maximum order numbers. This enabled libraries to be responsive to their community's needs. Supplier relationships and economies of scale allowed for good value for money, eg. the recommended retail price of the 'I'm a Dirty Dinosaur' book alone is the same as the total price of the kit (\$19.99).

During 2016, there were two order rounds, one in April and one in November. In 2017, libraries will be provided with recommended target numbers for purchase and distribution based on their communities.



Evidence of impact towards reaching all families with children 5 and under

25,700

Toolkits purchased for distribution in 2016

35%

Increase in the number toolkits purchased compared to the previous year

39

Participating councils purchased First 5 Forever resources in 2016

Council investment in First 5 Forever toolkits increased in 2016, with toolkit spend accounting for 11% of all funding made available, compared to 8% in 2015.

91,587 additional elements were distributed totalling 117,298 resources across Queensland. These additional elements accounted for 3% of funding spend in 2016, a slight increase on the

2% recorded in 2015. Increase in spend was most pronounced for the *It's Rhyme Time* book and DVD bundle with spend on this resource increasing by 263% in 2016.

As was the case in the implementation year, investment in First 5 Forever toolkits and resources varied significantly across different councils, in part reflecting the varying amounts of funding received.

Level of investment in official First 5 Forever resources was similar across different council types

As of November 2016, level of spend on First 5 Forever resources within the 2016 funding round was similar for councils located in major cities (accounting for 9% of spend), Inner and Outer Regional Queensland (7%) and Remote and Very Remote Queensland (9%).

This analysis uses the Australian Statistical Geography Standard designed by ABS. Please see the technical note for a detailed breakdown.

Widespread enthusiasm among parents for the toolkits

Response from interviewed parents and grandparents who had experience of the toolkits was unanimously positive.

'I thought it was great, I mean to be given that for free. The book is awesome and we have used the little DVD which was good ... how it is broken up into the age groups.' Parent interview

'We got the dinosaur pack with the book and everything ... it is a beautiful book and I was quite surprised at the quality ... he really loved it.' Parent interview

Evidence that parents are using the toolkit contents extensively

The toolkit contents are clearly being used extensively by families in different situations. Some described the *I'm a Dirty Dinosaur* book as a highlight, others mentioned the value of the *It's Rhyme Time* booklet as a reminder.

'She's seventeen months old now, and she's heavily into books and reading and numbers, and a lot of that, I think, is because of the First 5 Forever program. Her favourite book of all time is the *I'm a Dirty Dinosaur* book. I know the words now off by heart, backwards, forwards and upside down, and it's now to the point where she will make the sounds for the *Dirty Dinosaur* for me to read the story.' Parent interview

'I like the nursery rhyme book because we can sing them with her over and over again and so it is good ... have a bit of a refresher ... I must say it is my party trick to pull out the second verse of *Incy Wincy Spider* because a lot of people don't know that there is a great second verse ... she has started kind of bringing the action to the nursery rhymes that we sing over and over again.' Parent interview

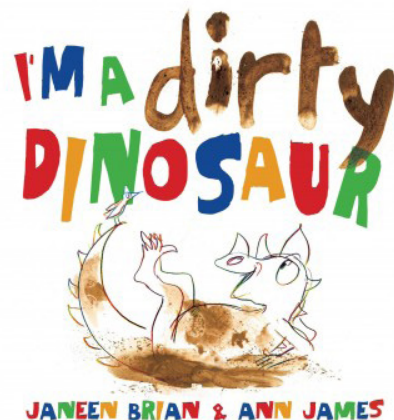
The resources also act as a prompt for parents to engage

The resources also serve as a visual reminder for parents to engage with their children through literacy activities. They are being used not only as a source of advice, but also the presence of the

resources about the home acts as a prompt to encourage engagement.

‘It’s a good reminder to me when I’ve got the kids on my own at home to sing more songs with them ... just seeing [the brochure] sitting there is a visual reminder for me sometimes of things I can do ... I just sort of have that sitting on the ledge in my lounge room.’ Parent interview

Some parents commented that the kits effectively gave them one less thing to worry about by providing reassurances that their child’s literacy needs could be met through the tools.



‘I really liked the little fold out song ... for quite a while I had it above the change table ... instead of doing a mindless activity it was reminding you to, you know, sing ‘round and round the garden’, ‘row, row, row your boat’ ... the little buggy book was great ... I thought that was excellent. It really encouraged me to get more books from the library and to become more of an active library user ... I was really thrilled [with] the tools that we were provided with ... they are the sorts of things that you ... don’t necessarily think of in those early stages when you are just trying to ... cope with a newborn.’ Parent interview

The toolkits are also clearly effective in taking First 5 Forever messaging to the wider family unit.

‘My husband was working full time at the time and it was really good for him because he couldn’t go to Rhyme Time during the week but he was able to watch the DVD and kind of use the book and sing nursery rhymes and that kind of thing which is great.’ Parent interview

Front line library staff see clear benefit from distributing the toolkits

At a library level, delivery staff described the toolkits as instrumental in reaching new audiences while also being a central resource about which to have purposeful conversations with parents and caregivers.

‘Provision of Toolkits in community settings, means families that do not attend the library and may not prioritise buying books or understand the importance of reading, talking, singing [now] have at least one book and many songs. As we give out the packs we talk to caregivers about how to incorporate early literacy into their everyday routines.’ Front line staff survey respondent

‘By providing the funding for toolkits, outreach programs and extra in-house programs, we were able to reach more families within our region. Many of these families stated they had previously felt ‘overlooked’ as they did not have private transport and there is no public transport available to help provide access to services.’ Front line staff survey respondent

‘The toolkit is a great resource to trigger conversations with care-givers. The *Let’s Play* board book is awesome, key message and story in one.’ Front line staff survey respondent

The value placed on the toolkits by staff is also influenced by the positive response from parents and children.

‘The highlights would be the reaction of children receiving the First 5 toolkit. A surprising number of children tell us that the ‘Dirty Dinosaur’ is their favourite book and just last week one child told us with great pride that she can read it [by] herself now ... Most children that have received the toolkit return, [using] the bag as their library bag.’ Front line staff survey respondent

‘The toolkits were so well appreciated by families, the song DVD was very popular as many parents stated they did not know the words to these traditional rhymes.’ Front line staff survey respondent

Toolkits at a council level

Echoing the feedback from front line staff above, some councils emphasised the value of the toolkits in reaching and bringing new audiences into the library.

‘Toolkits were valuable for ... English as a Second Language families who attend the play groups. Remote families at playgroups stated how wonderful to see a library come to them ... families loved the packs and the ideas given to them through the visit. The dinosaur book has become a favourite with the children.’ Council report

‘Attending the local Mums / Bubs group once in a while to reach those new mums and give them one of our Newborn toolkits has ... brought in new participants.’ Council report

However, a couple of responses suggest work remains to be done to convince some councils of their value.

‘I feel that there is too much literature for a new parent to absorb and that a gentler more fun kit may have worked better - leave the parents to

investigate the research behind First 5 at their leisure online.’ Council report

In addition, nine councils chose to develop their own version of the toolkits in 2016 using First 5 Forever resources and externally sourced items.

KIT 2 – REWARD PACK

Following completion of 5 F5F sessions

- Library Bag
- Where's the Green Sheep Buggy Book
- Let's Play Board Book
- How to read to your baby/toddler fridge magnet postcard
- How to support your beginning reader fridge magnet postcard
- How to support your child's oral language development fridge magnet postcard



Example of toolkit developed by libraries in-house

'We put together a Newborn Toolkit. This included a baby boardbook, First 5 Forever Nursery Rhyme Wall Frieze, First 5 Forever Info Brochure, How to Read to Baby fridge magnet, a teabag, RLQ online catalogue flyer, Little Rockers Radio flyer, Story Time flyer, homemade bookmark, and membership application for Kids.' Council report

Refreshing toolkit content will be well received by libraries

Eight councils put forward a suggested improvement of refreshing the toolkit contents and five councils requested more culturally-targeted content.

'New/different books in upcoming packs. Specific links to Early Years Learning Framework that would encourage Early Childhood Education & Care services to embed in every day practices with families. Resources to reflect the diversity of Queensland families.' Council report

Resource distribution process improved in 2016

In 2015, the challenge of procuring and storing the toolkits was one of the most common

issues described by councils. While this does remain an issue for a few councils, of the 27 councils suggesting improvements for toolkits and resources in 2016, only three related to affordability and three to distribution challenges. 'As storage space is limited, housing the merchandising products is difficult. The timeframes between ordering and receiving made it difficult to determine what to distribute and what to hold on to. It would be beneficial if all items in a toolkit could be purchased individually ... The toolkit was such a 'big ticket giveaway' that we felt it best to divide the items up and distribute them to families not coming into the library. Allocated funds did not enable a full toolkit to be presented to each family.' Council report

'Challenges for 2016 have included: Parent Toolkit availability - only able to access toolkits a couple of times a year when outreach is an unknown quantity.' Council report

'Available storage facilities to purchase Toolkits in bulk [has been a challenge]. We have had to hire a shipping container to place in the carpark of our Resources building to safely store stock.' Council report

Outreach events have grown exponentially

8,000

Estimated number of First 5 Forever outreach events in 2016 from participating councils

87,400

Estimated number of attendances at outreach events

30x

More outreach events in 2016 than reported pre-First 5 Forever

6x

Higher attendance rate in 2016 than reported pre-First 5 Forever

42

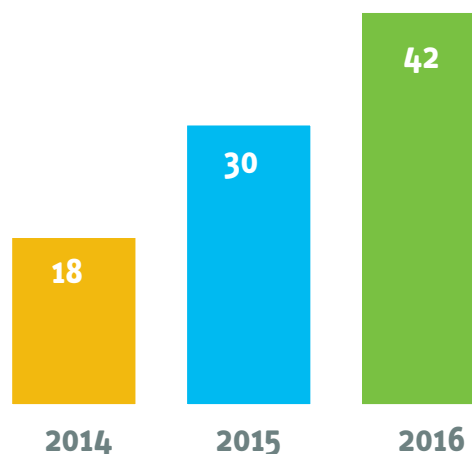
Participating councils reported programming First 5 Forever outreach activity compared to 30 in 2015

Please note that data supplied for participants and number of outreach sessions for 0-5 aged children may be under reported due to variation of local implementation of these programs. For this reason, year-on-year comparisons may be subject to alterations in future evaluation reports. Please also note that only the 49 councils submitting data are represented in figures.

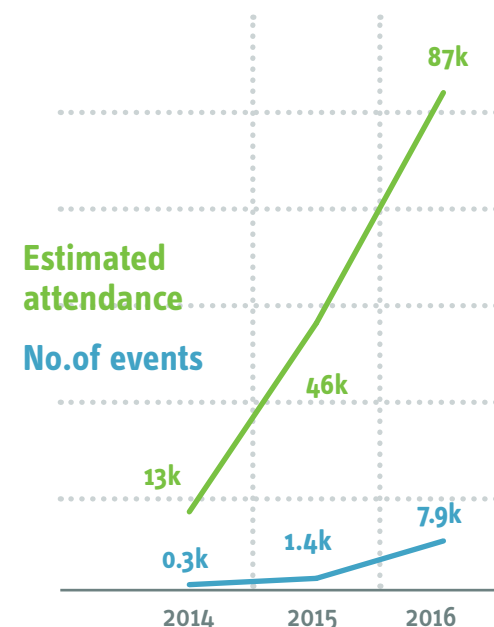
During the 2015 implementation evaluation, First 5 Forever was noted as an enabler for significant increases in outreach activity. This growth has been exponential, with an estimated **8,000 First 5 Forever outreach events** in 2016, approximately 30 times the reported number of events that took place pre-First 5 Forever in 2014 and showing significant growth on the figures for 2015.

In total there were an estimated **87,400 attendances** at outreach events, meaning that this form of activity accounted for 16% of First 5 Forever estimated participation in 2016, double the proportion in 2015 (8%).

No. of councils submitting evidence of programming First 5 Forever outreach events



Estimated number of outreach events and attendance



Only data from those councils who submitted data for each of the three years is represented in the graph above.

Evidence of reaching non-library users through outreach events

Pop-up events took place in a number of venues in 2016. These included shopping centres, community centres, health clinics and local parks. One council hosted a series of pop-up events in a large retailer, encouraging parents out shopping with their children to stop and take part in various literacy activities.

‘The variety of the delivery methods [is what I like best] ... I go to pop-up ones ... Bunnings ... community venues ... a very important way of promotion because at least surely through that they’re engaging different segments [of the population]’

Parent interview



Outreach is a priority for councils

Enabling libraries to carry out innovative outreach activity was ranked by councils as one of the strongest impacts of First 5 Forever in 2016.

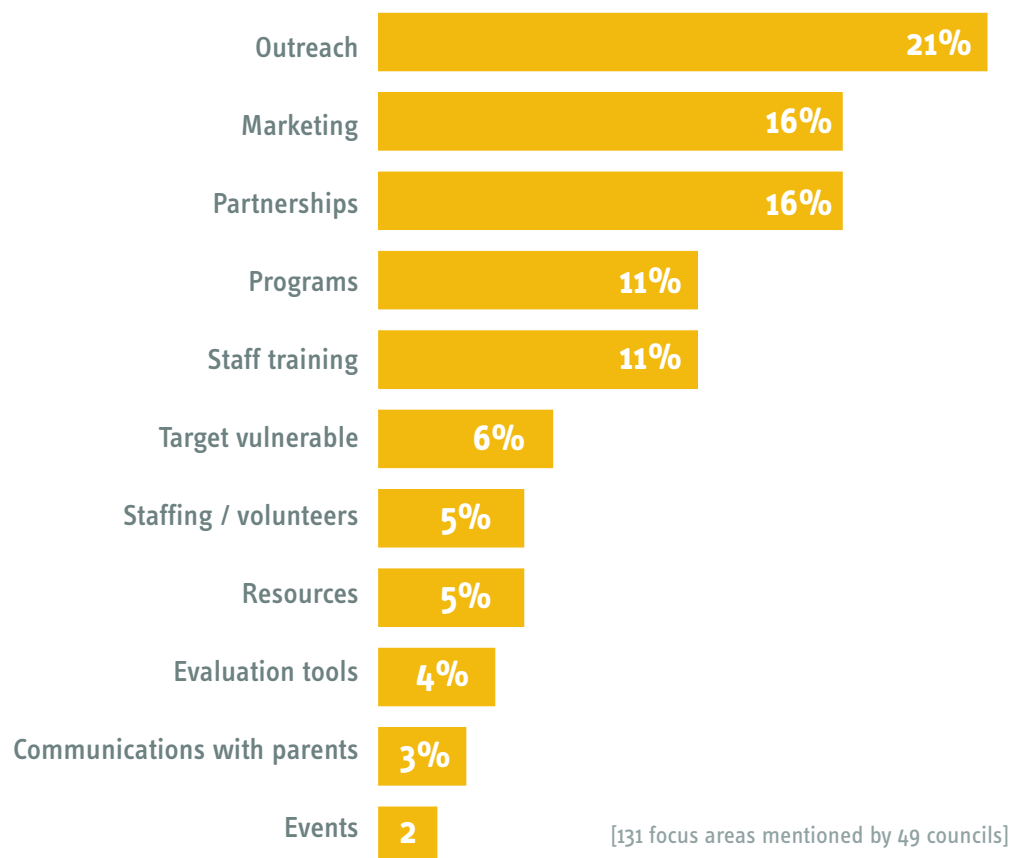
The significant growth in outreach looks set to continue. When asked what would be the focus for their libraries in delivering First 5 Forever in 2017, the most common response within council reports was outreach.

Outreach works towards universal access

Outreach activities are seen as a core strategy for including and engaging with harder-to-reach families and non-library users, to ensure that the initiative maintains a universal reach within the community.

'The Community Festival gave the library the ability to target a greater number of our community that are not regular library users. An increase in attendance to First 5 Forever sessions has put literacy at the forefront of more family's interactions. We have forged long lasting partnerships in our community that we can see continuing past this initiative.' Council report

Most common areas to focus efforts on in 2017 (% of councils mentioning each area from coded open-ended responses)



Positioning libraries as inclusive spaces

The progress made in reaching out to vulnerable families and caregivers was often mentioned when councils articulated the highlights of the initiative in 2016.

... Pop-up Library at [the local] Market Day [in] a low socio-economic area and the weekly markets are attended by a broad section of the community. The pop-up library allows library staff to connect with parents who, because of their backgrounds, may not feel comfortable attending the library.’ Council report

‘Engagement with the Indigenous community has increased significantly. The library visits the Indigenous playgroup. Through this engagement, many families have become more comfortable to participate in First 5 Forever library activities. This acts as a stepping stone for families to use the library. Library staff also attended cultural awareness training.’ Council report

Outreach activity is often facilitated through partnership-working, an idea that is explored in more depth in the following chapter.

Outreach helps overcome geographical barriers

Another related benefit of outreach, particularly for Remote and Very Remote Queensland, is the impact on coverage and geographical reach. Delivering library programming outside libraries means that geographically diverse communities benefit from direct engagement.

‘Without this role I would not be able to do outreach up to 3 days a week and connect with remote areas and families in our shire. It simply would not be happening. I have no doubt this role and program have supported our libraries to provide the best services to families and kids in our whole shire.’ Front line staff survey respondent

Despite huge gains and achievements, some councils seek more guidance on where and how to direct outreach efforts

Although the increase in outreach output is impressive, some councils described engaging specific, harder-to-reach communities as a challenge in 2016.

‘The greatest challenge for me is encouraging the families who really require the assistance of this program to attend.’ Council report

‘The primary barrier is reaching the most vulnerable members of our community. Generally speaking, parents and carers who bring their children to the library already recognise the importance of literacy. Our most vulnerable families often deal with other barriers to accessing the library (physical distance to the library, socioeconomic limitations, feeling unwelcomed, feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment)’ Council report

Helping councils assess where their efforts will make most impact

Some evidence suggests that libraries would benefit from more direction on assessing where to direct their efforts for better returns.

‘... It became apparent that not every event was the right fit for the Pop-up library ... [a request form was developed] ... to assist with assessing in-coming events and to determine if these events were likely to attract the targeted audience.’

Council report

‘Toolkits were given out at outreach events with lack of follow up, therefore there is unknown data on how toolkits have contributed to new membership at libraries.’ Council report

Recommendations

- **Progress plans for making toolkits more flexible to further encourage councils to adapt the resources to suit local community needs.**
- **Acknowledge the extent of new ground made across the network when it comes to outreach activity which will help feed momentum of First 5 Forever.** Sharing a greater level of detail on this sort of impact, as well as examples of best practice, will help libraries channel resources where they are most likely to reap the greatest return.

Collaborative partnerships & coordination

Collaborating with community agencies has significant benefits both for libraries and partner agencies by increasing **access, reach, consistency, efficiency and sustainability**.

In 2016, councils engaged with **565 partners** relating to children aged 0-5, with an **increasing number formed as a direct result of First 5 Forever**.

Involvement in reference groups was more widespread in 2016 and 18 new groups have been formed through First 5 Forever activity.

There is **strong buy-in** to the initiative from external partners who see a clear value in First 5 Forever and, along with library staff, aspire towards sustaining relationships.

Aim and outcomes

To maximise opportunity and access for families, the Service Level Agreement highlights to libraries the importance of joining or establishing a local steering or advisory group to ensure that children aged 0-5 are a focus and early literacy is on the agenda. Highlighting the First 5 Forever initiative within communities and continuing or establishing a shared vision fosters and encourages improved inter-agency collaboration.

Through collaboration and shared understanding, cross-sector agencies can promote libraries as universally accessible with programs that develop parent confidence, knowledge and skills in engaging with their children in play and language-based activities.

Libraries also offer a range of free resources and programs. Key partners include maternal and child health nurses, along with the early childhood education and care staff, playgroups and other government and non-government agencies directly supporting families of young children. The aim is to help communicate consistent key messages to families across multiple points in time. Through local networks and partnerships, long-term

strategies can be planned to ensure sustainable and needs-based community outcomes.

As in 2015, collaborative partnerships and coordination occurred at both a local council level and at a strategic, statewide level with State Library continuing to work with key strategic partners.

Cross-sector relationships

In 2016, State Library continued to work at a strategic and statewide level with key partner agencies. They have continued links with Queensland Health's Centre for Children's Health and Wellbeing (CCHW) and the Child Health sub-network (Queensland Child and Youth Clinical Network). Key outcomes for 2016 included continued support from CCHW for the First 5 Forever toolkits, the inclusion of First 5 Forever information in the booklet that accompanies the Personal Health Record Book (Red Book), the co-facilitation of a Language to Literacy workshop with staff from CCHW and the inclusion of First 5 Forever into the newly updated statewide training for Queensland Health Speech Pathologists called '*Health Promotion for Speech*

Pathologists'. Discussions commenced in 2016 to explore the possibilities of CCHW contributing to First 5 Forever Facebook posts and newsletters to families. In addition, a pop up First 5 Forever stand supported Speech Pathology Week at the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital.

State Library also met with the Deadly Ears team from Queensland Health to ensure, where appropriate, the message around ear health, especially in Indigenous Communities, was being communicated. This led to PowerPoint slides from the Deadly Ears team being included, where appropriate, in First 5 Forever workshops in collaboration with local service providers.

State Library continued their partnership with Speech Pathology Australia, again hosting the 2016 *Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards* at the State Library showcasing quality Australian children's literature. In 2016, Speech Pathology Australia launched *Speech Pathology 2030 Making Futures Happen*, a landmark project for the profession examining the future of Speech Pathology. First 5 Forever was provided as an example of 'leading the way' and a member of the First 5 Forever team attended Speech Pathology Australia's strategic planning session.

Conference presentations and publications also showcased First 5 Forever in 2016 with a paper presented at the Speech Pathology Australia national conference, and articles published in *QKindy* magazine and in the ECTA Journal: *Educating Young Children*.

Evidence of impact towards developing partnerships

86%

Of participating councils engaged in partnerships in 2016

565

Partners, organisations and agencies engaged with First 5 Forever in 2016

73%

Of these partnerships were a direct result of First 5 Forever

First 5 Forever increasingly influential in partnership-forming

With 565 partners engaged during 2016, First 5 Forever is increasingly acting as a catalyst for libraries in continuing or establishing community partnerships.

Although the actual number of partners engaged by libraries was slightly lower compared to 2015 (565 compared to 625 recorded in the implementation year), an increasing number of partnerships were formed as a direct result of the initiative: 411 in 2016 (73%) compared to 375 in 2015 (60%).



First 5 Forever at Speech Pathology Week, 2016

'First 5 Forever has encouraged collaborative partnerships between support organisations, not just in the education sector, but within health, social and disability support as well as recreation services. These connections are extremely valuable and we have developed several programs/events outside of First 5 Forever that complement the goals.' Partner respondent

Early Childhood organisations were the most common partner type in 2016

Nearly three in ten First 5 Forever partners in 2016 were early childhood organisations and just under one in five wider community organisations. Education (14%) and health (14%) partners were also prominent.

Early childhood partners were consistently the most common across libraries in major cities (26%), in Inner and Outer Regional Queensland (29%) and Remote and Very Remote Queensland (26%).

The data does, however, reveal that libraries in remote areas were more likely to join forces with pre-existing partners; six of nineteen partners of this group were new (32%) compared to 74% for libraries elsewhere.

Partnership types in 2016



'Strong relationships have been developed with key early childhood services and support services ... through regular outreach visits and partnerships in outreach activities such as Story Time in the Park.' Council report

Two-thirds of councils now engaging in a reference group

65% of councils engaged with at least one local reference group in 2016, fulfilling this requirement of the SLA. Of those who did, it was common for libraries to be represented on multiple groups, with three councils engaging with five or more groups.

The results show positive progress on activity in 2015 when only 19 councils (circa 40%) were taking part in a reference group.

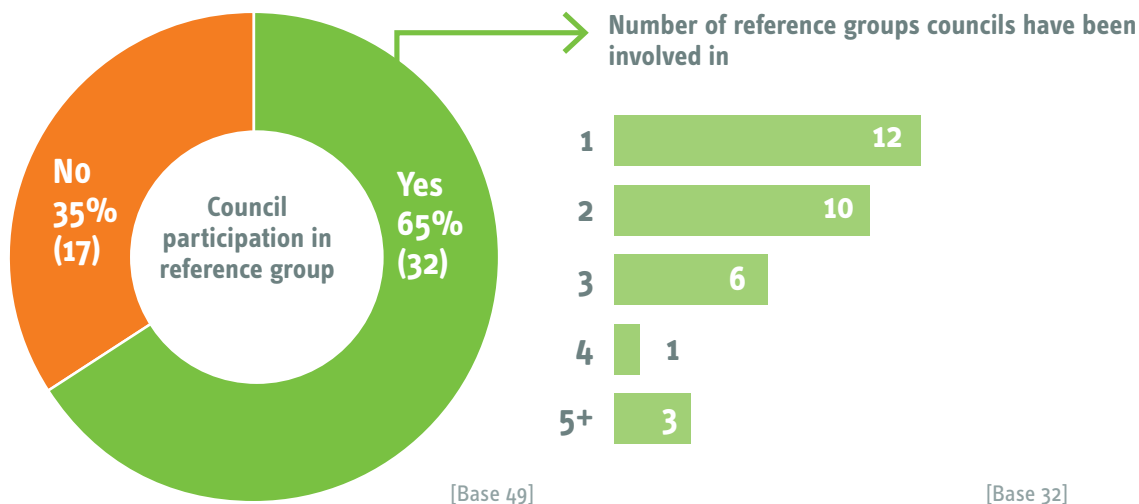
18

Reference groups established as a direct result of First 5 Forever

94%

Of participating councils involved in a reference group agree that it contributes to the initiative's core aim (53% strongly agree, 41% agree)

'The amazing and tireless efforts of the First 5 Forever coordinator in our region is commendable! Her advocacy and relationship building has established and reaffirmed many partnerships across our region.' Partner respondent



Lack of resource, remoteness and no pre-existing groups all reasons for not yet joining

Those councils who had yet to join a reference group were asked why. Reasons included a lack of available resources or consistent staff to take part, no pre-existing reference group being established and remote locations meaning reference groups were deemed impractical.

A couple of responses suggested that 'reference groups' could be more clearly defined and that some councils need more guidance on what benefits they can enjoy from this way of community working, the sort of agenda this group can address and how they can be maintained.

'There's really strong interest and they're all attending [the group] – what do I do with them now? How do I keep the momentum going? How do we do something meaningful?' Council report

'The focus ... this year has been to form new partnerships and to establish a solid foundation for a quality program. Although [we have] not formally taken part in a Reference Group, we have actively contacted, investigated and liaised with established organisations and key personnel including those who are commonly in contact with families in the community and / or are in the early childhood sector.' Council report

Partnerships and community networks increase access to the initiative

Evidence from parent interviews, front line library staff, partners and councils support the outcome that First 5 Forever's reach and impact is expanded through partnerships and working together.

'First Five Forever are reaching a target population that they might not otherwise have reached through interaction with our service.' Partner respondent

Partnerships are crucial in helping libraries gain access to harder-to-reach families, working towards the aim of First 5 Forever being a universal initiative.

‘[One of the] main challenges for us [was] getting the indigenous mothers of that target age to attend. Some are not attending any such programs. However we have noticed a difference since [our local] Aboriginal Community Health have come on board with us.’ Council report

‘[Partnerships have benefited us] by opening up doorways and opportunities to reach out and work closely with other organisations who have a better understanding of which areas in our community need essential services from us such as outreach programs.’ Front line staff survey

Several interviewed parents identified community partners as their source for initially finding out about the initiative.

‘My child health nurse told me about it, and that would have been when my daughter was two months, and she reminded me about it when she was four months because I hadn’t yet had time to go and get the pack from the library ... we also went along to a couple of the story sessions that featured the Dirty Dinosaur book... I wouldn’t have known anything about it if it wasn’t for the ... nurse’ Parent interview

‘We had a new born assessment at the hospital and they had a mother’s group at the library and then I found...that they have sessions for the little ones at the library.’ Parent interview

‘They came out to my playgroup ... did ... a few sessions.’ Parent interview

‘[I found out] through a mums’ group set up through the hospital that I gave birth at ... one of the ladies from the hospital told us about it ... at the child health clinics they had some posters up.’ Parent interview

Strong agreement of First 5 Forever achieving its core aims among partners

16 representatives from partner organisations responded to a mainly qualitative survey. The majority were from early childhood (12) or education (five) organisations and most had supported the initiative through either distributing First 5 Forever resources (11) or hosting events / activities (eight). Geographically, partners were based in Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Darling Downs and South West, Wide Bay Burnett, Central Queensland and Mackay / Isaac / Whitsundays. Most had been partnering with libraries for over a year (12) and just over half (nine) of partnerships were formed directly through the First 5 Forever initiative.

Aligning to shared goals

All partners agreed that First 5 Forever partnerships had allowed them to make connections with like-minded individuals and groups (11 strongly agreed, five agreed).

There is strong evidence to support the idea that First 5 Forever positively contributes to and aligns with partner strategic focus areas and 13 of 16 partners felt that partnerships were mutually beneficial.

'Our school's Annual Improvement Plan states 'reading' as a main objective. The ability to offer a program to develop oral language before children are school age cannot be underestimated.' Partner respondent

'Our partnership was instigated by the local First 5 Forever coordinator. Given that it aligned with our own service philosophy we have been very happy to continue the partnership.' Partner respondent

'The First Five Forever program aligns with what we are trying to achieve in the Parents as Teachers Program.' Partner respondent

'Community partnerships [are] part of our foundational standards and align with our everyday core business.' Partner respondent

'I feel the understanding of emergent literacy is already a strength of my organisation so I see First 5 Forever initiatives and resource delivery as an added resource.' Partner respondent

Partners frequently identified increased ability to access harder-to-reach families as a key outcome

There is a clear sense that First 5 Forever is helping libraries and partner organisations to access and offer support to families across diverse communities.

'The events ... provide an opportunity for us to meet with new families that may benefit from our ... playgroup and programs.' Partner respondent

'Connecting with some communities where there are barriers with other service providers - First 5 Forever has been able to work around those barriers and we have then connected in.' Partner respondent

'Increased reach: our organisation has been able to host four events to connect with local families - each one was supported by our libraries.' Partner respondent

'I feel this program has reached whole communities and individuals in our area using very inclusive, non-threatening, easily accessible experiences.' Partner respondent

Enhancing services and reducing duplication

Several partner representatives felt that the First 5 Forever initiative had enhanced or complemented the services that they offer to families, with partnerships helping to fill gaps in provision, as well as resulting in efficiencies through shared resources and expertise.

‘Our approaches complement each other and by working together, we can learn from each other and provide more holistic support in a community context.’ Partner respondent

‘Children are raised by parents first with support of teachers and others. Teachers mostly only meet parents later in the 5 years and it is great that First 5 Forever are teaching parents ... the importance of early childhood literacy.’ Partner respondent

‘We have been able to add to a service we already provide but have extra information to give to families and extra resources our organisation would otherwise not have had.’ Partner respondent

A common desire to continue partnering

All partners agreed that First 5 Forever aimed for sustainable partnerships to support Queensland communities (10 strongly agreed, six agreed) and there is clear intent from partner organisations that collaborations will continue. Likewise, all partners believed the First 5 Forever partnership would continue (12 strongly agreed, four agreed).

‘We would like to see our partnership with the library continue because it has been a regular part of our program and something that the children and families look forward to.’ Partner respondent

‘This program is so beneficial to the members of our community by promoting oral language skills. We would love to continue this partnership.’ Partner respondent



Libraries recognise partnerships as key

Council representatives from libraries were asked to rate the impact of First 5 Forever in a variety of capacities. Responses were given using a zero – 10 scale to articulate perceived impact and the chart to the right displays aggregated scores. This data shows that, from a council viewpoint, developing sustainable partnerships between libraries and community partners in relation to early literacy and language for children and families is where First 5 Forever is having most impact.

An intention for enduring partnerships

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the strong benefits from partner collaboration articulated above, maintaining sustainable partnerships is a strong intention of councils and front line library staff.

‘A focus next year would be to continue to offer quality children’s programs at our libraries and quality outreach. We are going to continue working on great existing partnerships we have made and will continue to look for other opportunities to engage with new partners.’
Council report

Strength of agreement score on First 5 Forever impact, from council representative perspective



[Base 49, ratings given using a 10-point scale]

'Our focus for 2016 was to start to increase the amount of outreach sessions we held with an aim to grow partnerships with local community organisations and to start connecting with families in the area who do not regularly attend the library. I feel this was particularly well done in 2016 and possibly exceeded our expectations. Partnerships with local community organisations have developed and strengthened having a direct impact on the increase in numbers in our library programs ... After a good 12 months of solid networking, we have now developed a strong partnership with Child Health which is proving invaluable.' Front line staff survey respondent

Some libraries have experienced barriers

Although the majority of councils are working in partnerships through First 5 Forever (only seven out of 49 participating councils did not in 2016), some libraries have faced challenges getting partnerships off the ground or engaging the most relevant partners.

In some cases libraries may benefit from increased guidance and shared learnings from across

the network to inform tactics for establishing sustainable and successful relationships.

'It's almost impossible to sustain meaningful partnerships in our region. We have rationalised the time investment we make in community engagement with ... those areas we know we have buy-in and / or capacity.' Council report

Recommendations

- **Provide increased guidance across the network on initiating and sustaining partnerships and how reference groups can assist in this process.**

The benefits of partnerships are perceived across several stakeholder groups involved in First 5 Forever, from parent and caregiver end-users, through to the partners themselves. While First 5 Forever has had a significant impact in forming new community partnerships, not all councils are yet involved in this activity or supported by a reference group. These councils could be further encouraged.

- **State Library to continue its advocacy role, engaging senior-level stakeholders to help further roll-out partnership opportunities.** State Library has already invested significant effort in engaging statewide, cross-sector organisations and this should continue in order to support libraries in this activity on the ground.

Family & community awareness campaign

The First 5 Forever **brand** and supporting **marketing campaign** is **multi-faceted**, designed to be a vehicle for delivering consistent messages to parents and caregivers across the state, while being flexible for local implementation in reflection of a library's provision and its unique community needs.

2016 is marked by a **significant increase in marketing activity** at a local and state level; an enhanced web presence for the initiative; and signs of **community buzz** and **growing and powerful word of mouth**.

Marketing is a **priority area** for many libraries in 2017 and there is appetite for increased skills and capacity in this area.

Aim and outcomes

The provision of resources and guidelines for councils to promote First 5 Forever at a local level is supported by a multi-channel marketing campaign delivered statewide.

The campaign targets parents, caregivers and influential organisations and individuals. It helps to promote the central messages that rich early language and literacy environments are vital in providing children with the best start from birth; the important role families play; and how families can access quality activities and resources and support at their local library. First 5 Forever branding provides the campaign with a consistent identity that is carried through all elements of First 5 Forever activity, from the parent toolkits, through to a suite of branding templates that libraries can adapt and apply in a local context.

Evidence of impact towards a transformative marketing campaign

\$207k

The value (in equivalent advertising space rate) of published media articles mentioning First 5 Forever

39,198

Sessions on the First 5 Forever website, engaging 29,598 users

>40%

The average open rate of First 5 Forever's monthly enews

983,134

The number of times First 5 Forever Facebook page content was displayed in news feeds and via shares.

Growing online presence

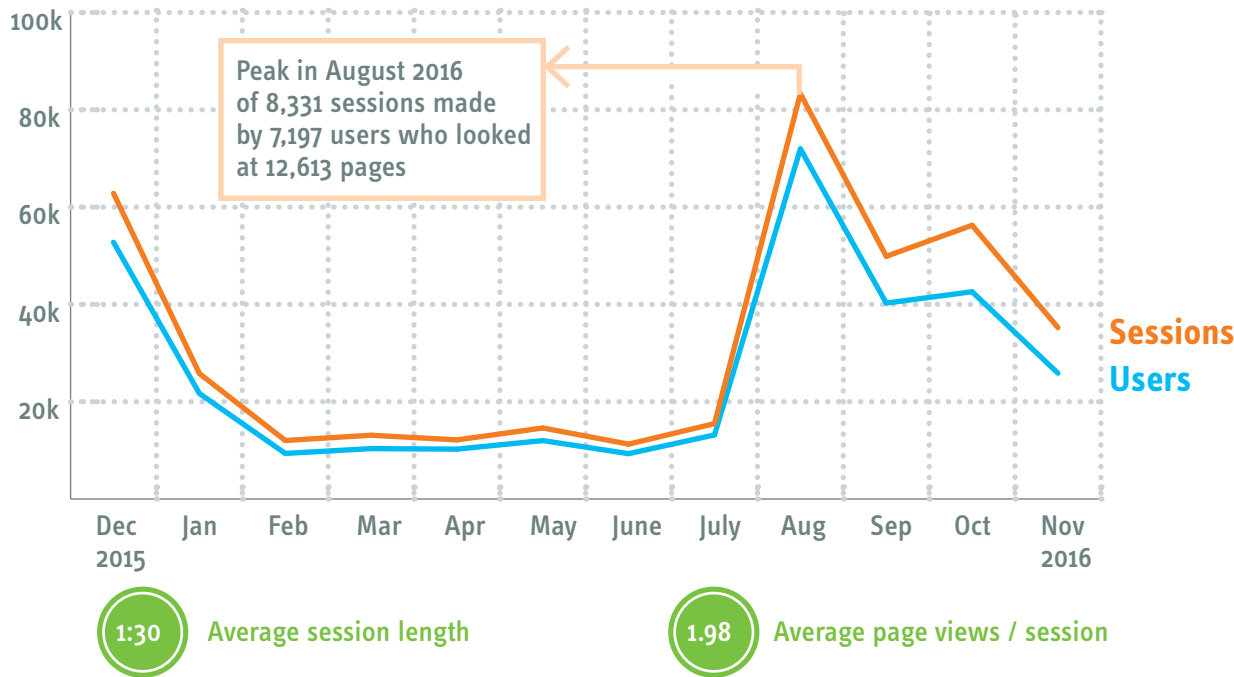
First 5 Forever’s online activity was particularly effective during the latter third of 2016. Traffic to the website peaked in August, coinciding with the delivery of a statewide digital campaign. The maintenance of strong figures can also be

attributed to the appointment of a dedicated Communications and Marketing Coordinator in mid-July and the launch of a website-based photo competition in September.

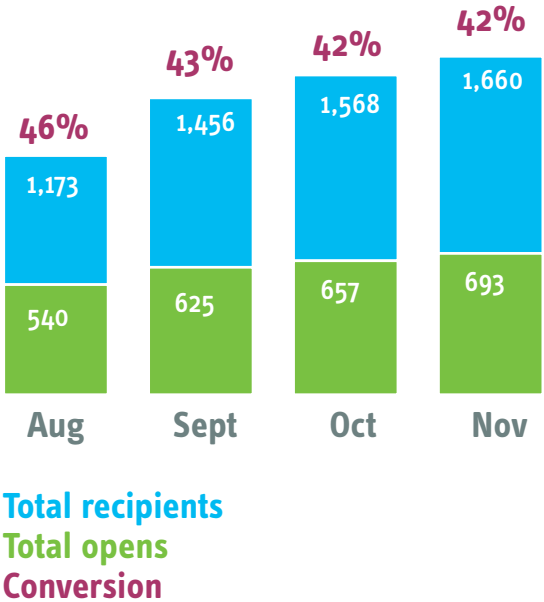
Enews subscriber numbers have grown relatively steadily, rising by 42% over a four-month period between August and November 2016.

Open rates are also high, ranging from between 42% and 46%. This compares favourably to Mail Chimp’s Email Marketing Benchmarks for email campaigns internationally which show, for example, an average open rate of 26% for email campaigns from Government organisations and 22% for education and training.¹

First 5 Forever website traffic Dec 2015 – Nov 2016



First 5 Forever enews engagement in 2016



Facebook is successful in spreading First 5 Forever's key messages

The First 5 Forever Facebook page launched in July 2016 and between July and December 2016 achieved the following:

3,489 followers

Users who liked the First 5 Forever Facebook page*

7,478 engagements

The number of actions relating to a post or ad e.g. likes, comments, shares, photo views*

5,424 click-throughs

983,134 impressions

The number of times a First 5 Forever page has been displayed in news feeds, shares etc., equivalent to 14,896 impressions per post*



*It is important to note that these figures do not take into account the significant First 5 Forever Facebook content generated by councils, libraries, kindergartens, community organisations and parent networks. Of this content, 364 social media posts mentioning First 5 Forever were tracked with the top sources being Facebook (44.5%), Twitter (32.14%) and Instagram (21.98%).

Interviewed parents and grandparents mentioned Facebook as a way to stay connected with First 5 Forever and suggested this was an effective

method of communicating First 5 Forever core messages to new audiences.

'I have checked out the website. I haven't signed up with the enews ... I wasn't aware of that. Certainly on Facebook there comes quite regularly these little snippets and little articles ... I always read them ... I found them very informative.'
Grandparent interview

'[Library staff] have been posting on Facebook and sharing, like they take photos of us, in a real positive way ... at least that potentially could get other people.' Parent interview

'I like seeing Facebook information ... rather than emails ... I do ... tend to find I am not opening emails when I get too many ... if I see it come up on my Facebook I am more likely to go 'oh that sounds interesting, I will click on an article' ... I do like getting pamphlets and things when I am actually at the library because I tend to read hard copies of stuff.' Parent interview

A range of activity via statewide media outlets

Supporting the work of libraries promoting their local activities, State Library continued to deploy a range of offline and online marketing strategies and media outlets to increase awareness of the initiative and to promote the importance of early literacy. The table to the right summarises the combined 2016 activity generated by the network and State Library.

State Library and network coordinated publicity activity

Marketing type	Description
AM radio	12 mentions, mainly via ABC on morning or breakfast shows. The ABC Brisbane 'Statewide Morning' show reaches an estimated 45k listeners.
FM radio	16 mentions, 15 within Queensland and 1 within NSW. Most mentions made via ABC network although First 5 Forever also featured on Triple M, 4TO, 96.5 and Hit Networks. ABC Sunshine Coast and ABC Gold Coast stations reach an estimated 5.1k and 7k listeners respectively.
Blog	Several blogs promoted First 5 Forever and shared key early literacy messages. For example, the Australian women's website Mamamia blog post was shared a total of 1.2k times. Other blog mentions include on Kidspot, The Weekend Edition, Brisbane Kids and Kids in the City.
Magazine	3 magazine articles promoting upcoming First 5 Forever activities were shared in a Queensland magazine and national magazine, with a total estimated circulation of 6.2k readers.
Newspaper	111 articles were published in local Queensland newspapers promoting upcoming First 5 Forever events or reporting on previous events/activities/programs. The total estimated readership was 1.5m.
Online news	34 online news articles were published promoting upcoming First 5 Forever events or reporting on previous events/activities/programs. Data was available for 9 news sources which had a total reach of 937.3k unique daily visitors and an average story audience of 26.2k readers.
TV	13 regional news reports on ABC about First 5 Forever outreach in Queensland prisons. Broadcasts were made to all Australian states and territories, except NT, reaching an estimated broadcast audience of 222k viewers.

August 2016 campaign

Advertising agency Mediacom was engaged in August 2016 to deliver a statewide digital awareness campaign. It aimed to deliver First 5 Forever key messages to families of 0-5 year old children statewide, drive traffic to the First 5 Forever website and increase video views. Digital ads and a promotional video featured the First 5 Forever frog and a selection of taglines.

Campaign goals and results

Measure	Campaign result	Campaign goal
Unique users	1.88m	n/a
Views	94.3k	50k
Cost / view	\$0.11	\$0.20
Impressions	6.35m	6.75m
Cost / thousand impressions	\$7.74	\$7.27



Libraries increasingly investing in marketing at a local level

Three percent of council funding between December 2015 and November 2016 was used on marketing and councils reported intention to direct a further thirteen percent of unallocated funds on localised marketing, suggesting a future increase in activity.

In addition, marketing activity was one of the most frequently-mentioned priority areas for 2017 (mentioned by 43% of councils within open-ended responses to where they intend to focus efforts in the year ahead).

'[We intend] to find additional, creative ways to market and promote the program. Two considerations are gas pump marketing and signs in toilets at local...restaurants.' Council Report

'As of January 2017 we are paying for a year of full page advertisements in *Kids on the Coast*, a local free magazine that is extremely well read in this region.' Council report

Actual spend was estimated to be approximately \$230k between December 2015 and November 2016.

Libraries adapting resources to their network context

Evidence shows that councils were innovative with their marketing activities, adapting to their particular local contexts and using funds to create posters, flyers, branded uniforms and a range of merchandise. Over half of councils created First 5 Forever resources themselves, most frequently posters and brochures.

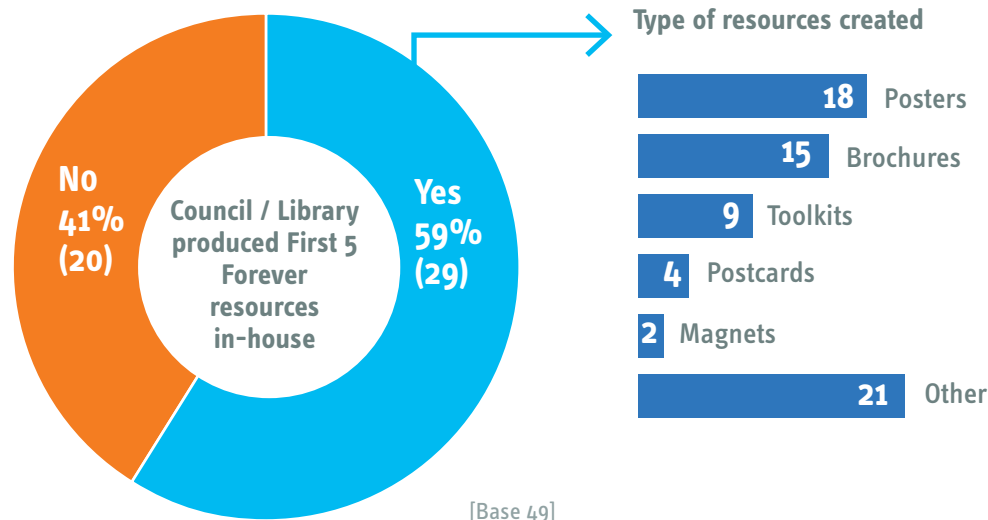
More central investment and guidance is called for from some councils

Similar to the previous year, councils put forward suggestions for greater investment in more prominent statewide marketing campaigns.

'We have needed to be cautious with our spending with limited amounts being used for resources, promotional material and advertising. As a result, it would have been extremely helpful had State Library been able to roll out television, radio and other print advertising which would have helped exposure in the smaller regional areas and would have encouraged statewide unity.' Council report

When articulating challenges for 2016, some councils also focused on marketing, revealing barriers within certain councils and a lack of expertise in some areas.

'Marketing and advertising First 5 Forever proved to be a challenge ... due to lack of budget for this activity and lack of experience in this area ... Council communications also had competing priorities and limitations which has restricted the ability of First 5 Forever to share messages on a regular basis.' Council report



'Inability to freely utilise social media which decreased promotional opportunities.' Council report

Community referrals and localised publicity is highly effective

As discussed in the previous chapter, interviews with parents revealed that publicising the initiative through community networks is highly effective and should be further encouraged across the library network.

Several interviewed parents mentioned referrals from others, particularly health workers. They also made suggestions for publicity placements

including local kindergartens and primary schools, local newspapers and broadcast media, local supermarkets, and existing promotional initiatives aimed at new parents.

'If you didn't go the library, you probably wouldn't know about it ... in Brisbane when you have had a baby, you are given ... a Baby Bounty Bag ... free samples of nappies and wipes and creams. It has information ... everyone gets one, and you can go to the chemist and get one when you are pregnant, and they do give them out in hospitals as well and so ... my only suggestion would be to put a pamphlet or something in there ... there are lots of baby expos and pregnancy expos and that kind of thing ... so they could maybe have a stall there.' Parent interview

'[I see advertising] only at the library and so if you don't go to the library you wouldn't see it ... maybe radio ads or perhaps like we have only got two local supermarkets ... both have notice boards and so perhaps putting their flyers up somewhere like that rather than just at the library.' Parent interview

'It might be handy to even have a sample package with the child health nurse so she can say, 'Hey, this is what you can get at the library,' so that people have more of an incentive to go there, and a lot of people, once they start going, once they go into the library and see what's actually there, they're more inclined to repeatedly go.' Parent interview

Word of mouth and online peer-to-peer referrals are helping build momentum

Interviewed parents revealed that a powerful level of advocacy for the initiative exists within parent networks with several either promoting First 5 Forever to others or hearing about it through other parents.

'Some of our friends ... started going to the sessions as well ... which was really good ... we told them about it.' Parent interview

'With our mother's group ... one of the girls... made up a page so we post everything on there. So I've even shared your link for this, on there to see if everyone's interested.' Parent interview

'A friend with another little boy who is much the same age ... was going to the Rhyme Time ... and she invited me.' Parent interview

'I'm involved in ... the Australia Breastfeeding Association ... so I have actually organised ... for First 5 Forever program to come along to one of our meetings ... I would personally share it on Facebook and I would start telling friends, because I just feel it was such a valuable program ... overall I would say over time I think it's growing [in terms of awareness].' Parent interview

Parent understanding of the overall aims reveals clear messaging through marketing and supporting resources

Evidence suggests that the mix of messaging via publicity, interaction with library staff and First 5 Forever resources is successfully communicating

the initiative's core messages. Not only is this apparent in parents' understanding of effective facilitation techniques and how what they do effects their children's outcomes, but it is also evident in their recall and perceptions of the overall First 5 Forever mission.

'Its aim is literacy anywhere and everywhere ... in a shop, at home, reading a book, singing a song. Just interacting with your child.' Parent interview

'Trying to teach kids about learning just in different ways ... using day to day activities sort of to teach children and get them into that love of reading in the first five years.' Parent interview

'I think it is ... set up to educate parents on the importance of how the little ones learn in the first five years and how playing and reading and singing and that sort of thing is actually really crucial to them and ... their development.' Parent interview

Recommendations

- **Consider integrating more practical ‘marketing 101’ formats into training offered by State Library.** Focused sessions designed to build library staff confidence and expertise when it comes to marketing activity would be beneficial. These types of sessions may also enhance State Library’s understanding of the challenges faced at council level and brainstorm tactics for overcoming them.
- **Share examples of best practice where libraries are using central First 5 Forever content to develop in-house and localised resources.** With nearly 6 in 10 councils adapting First 5 Forever resources and marketing materials, a centralised review and subsequent sharing of best practice may help libraries craft enhanced marketing strategies and focus their efforts in this area.
- **Encourage even more advocacy.** Tactics for incentivising parents to spread the word – such as the talk, play, sing, read photo competition – should continue to be developed.

- **Capture data to quantify the impact of marketing investment.** Offline and online recommendations are having a clear impact in bringing new families to the initiative. Quantifying this impact in future evaluation rounds, along with recall of other marketing sources, would help direct efforts into the most effective activities.

1 <https://mailchimp.com/resources/research/email-marketing-benchmarks/>



Workforce capability & standards

In 2016, First 5 Forever **professional development activity increased**, engaging 673 participants from 44 councils in Queensland.

Participants experienced strong outcomes as a result of attending from **increased confidence** and **knowledge** through to **inspiration** from collaborating with their peers. The value of the sessions mean that **demand may outstrip supply** and increased access and a sustainable model of continued professional development is a key focus moving forward.

Aim and outcomes

Libraries throughout Queensland are a major provider of free baby, rhyme and story time sessions, activities and resources for families. They provide a range of services for children and their families which aim to support children's literacy development, foster an interest in literature and develop a love of learning. These programs are free to the community and are run by a range of staff and volunteers.

First 5 Forever recognised these existing opportunities and the unique role library staff have to directly communicate with families. Library programs offer a unique opportunity to create welcoming and supportive environments for parents and caregivers of young children and enhance the connection between the parent and their child and other families, while providing social and informal learning opportunities.

Libraries interface directly with families in the early years. The implementation of First 5 Forever has expanded their role to communicate realistic and practical messages on the importance of the early years and a carer's role as their child's first and most important educator.

As a result of this, and the evidence supporting the importance of the first five years, in 2015, the First 5 Forever team developed the foundation workshop in the series, *Language to Literacy*. This workshop included both library staff and community partners and promoted a method of engaging communities to improve networks and action plan to establish early literacy as a key initiative in their community. Key topics of this workshop were: understanding the importance of the first five years, focusing on early literacy and language for children aged five and under, and engaging families in programming, through messaging as well as marketing and media.

A core pathway of First 5 Forever's Professional Development

First 5 Forever PD available to staff across the library network

Library staff are empowered to deliver focused & consistent literacy messages

Parents receive a more coherent and consistent message about their role

Parents are more invested in and empowered to facilitate

Parents practicing more quality literacy activities in and around the home

Child has enhanced love of reading and improved literacy foundations

Language to Literacy workshops continued in 2016, with professional development activities expanded through State Library offering a second workshop 'Baby Play and Story Time' alongside its 2015 foundation workshop. As in 2015, a mixture of forums and webinars for First 5 Forever library staff were also held.

In 2016, a need was identified for the continued development of workforce capability for library staff to maximise the existing interface and opportunities libraries have to connect with children 0-5 years and families in their local community.

In response to this identified need, the First 5 Forever team worked closely with a cross-discipline focus group of key early childhood professionals including library, early childhood, health, education, program facilitators and parent representatives to design a workshop specifically for library staff that delivers evidenced-based, age-appropriate programs in an informal public setting including content on babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Feedback from the *Language to Literacy* workshops was also taken into consideration for timing and delivery methods. This additional workshop was named *Baby Play*

and Story Time Facilitator Workshop and was introduced in September 2016 specifically for library staff.

State Library has used a collaborative, evidence-based approach to creating professional development content delivered across the state and utilising the skills and expertise from a range of professionals. Councils have a requirement to enable staff to access professional development sessions, as set out in the Service Level Agreement.

Evidence of impact towards raising standards

673

Participants engaged in 2016 in workshops, forums and webinars

9%

Increase in participants in 2016 compared to 2015

20

Workshops in 14 different locations across the state (15 Language to Literacy, 5 Baby Play and Story Time)

4

Face to face forums and webinars for First 5 Forever library staff

44

Queensland councils engaged in First 5 Forever workshops, forums or webinars in 2016

Please note that all data within this chapter covers the December 2015 to November 2016 reporting period unless otherwise stated.

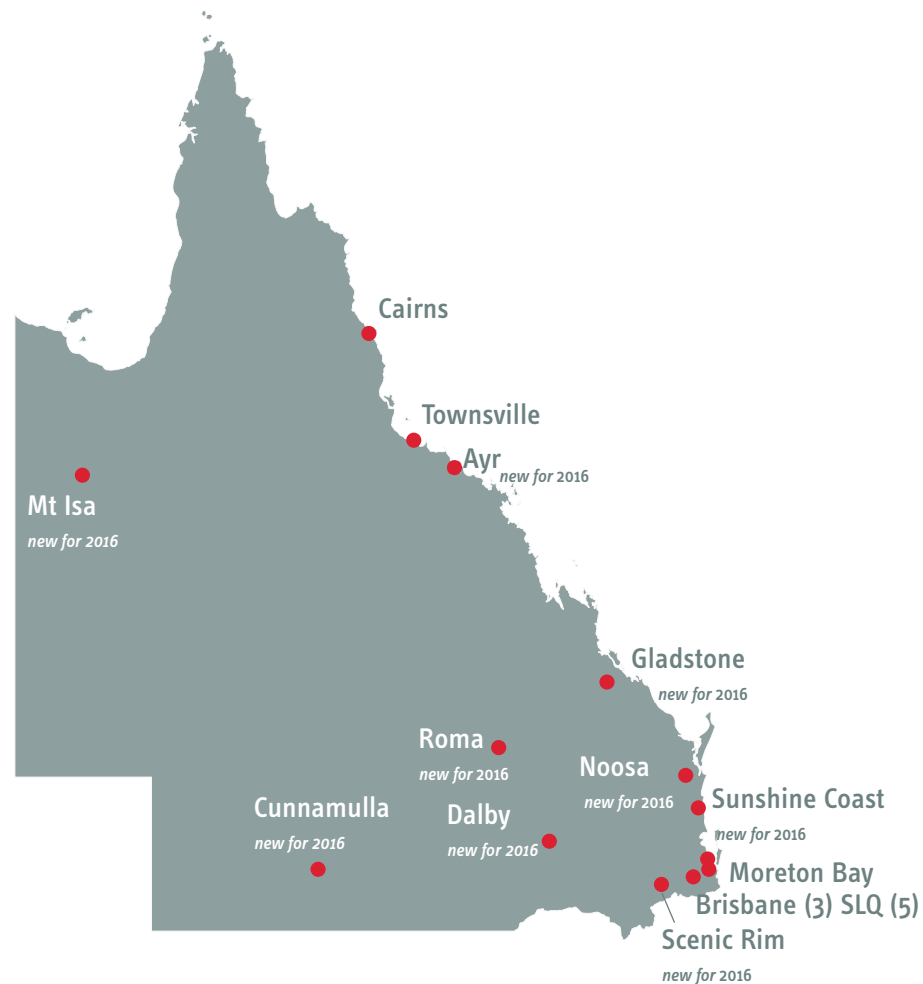
Increasing regional coverage

Professional Development sessions had greater regional coverage in 2016, with Language to Literacy sessions taking place at 9 new locations. Overall State Library staff delivered workshops in a total of 14 different locations (compared to 13 locations in 2015), with greater western Queensland reach including workshops in Dalby, Roma, Cunnamulla and Mount Isa. Baby Play and Story Time was run five times from September to November 2016 with library staff from across the state travelling to Brisbane to attend. One workshop was specifically tailored and delivered to Indigenous Knowledge Centre staff.



Indigenous Knowledge Centre staff participating in a Baby Play and Story Time workshop

Delivery locations of professional development workshops



Participants continue to attend from across the state

The second map to the right illustrates the councils represented at workshops. Similar to 2015, participants came from right across Queensland.

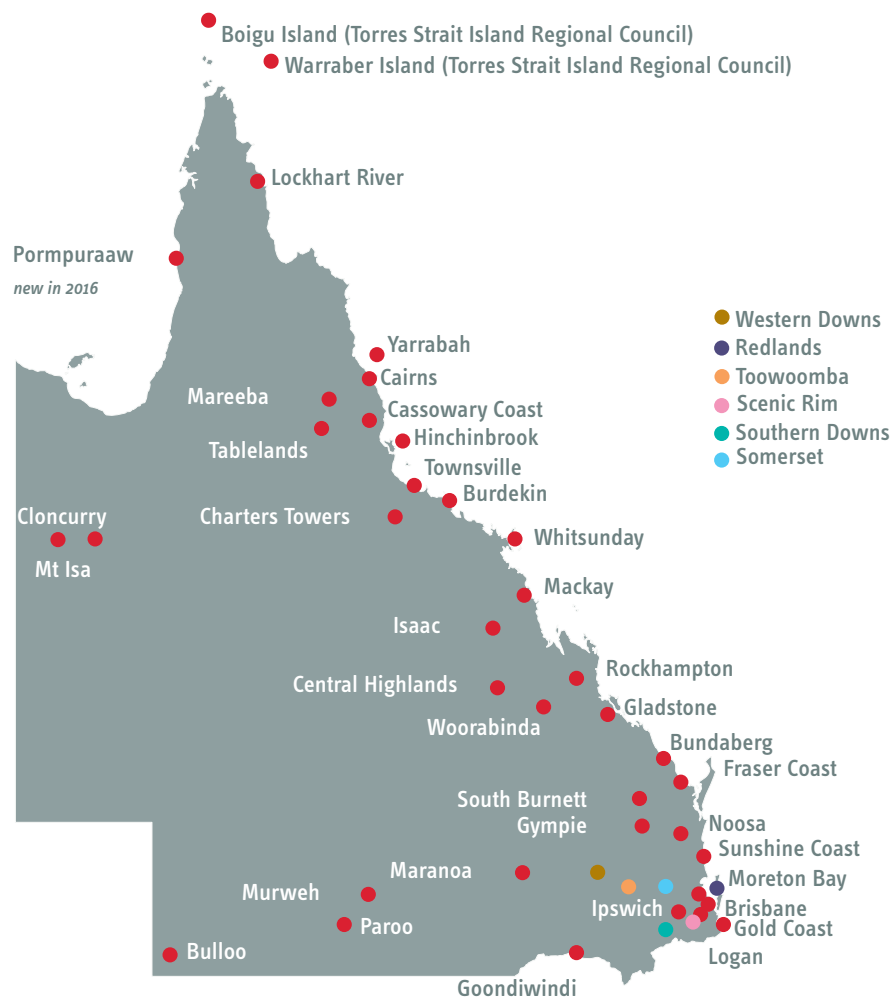
There was a 9% increase in overall participant numbers in 2016 for workshops, webinars and forums, with 673 attending compared to 617 in 2015.¹

A range of backgrounds and agencies were again represented in the participants who attended the First 5 Forever Language to Literacy workshops with 134 discrete agencies, organisations and workplaces represented.

The proportion of library staff attending – a priority audience for the sessions – continued to be a focus in 2016. In the foundation Language to Literacy workshops, which also involve community partners, 56% of participants were from libraries. The development of the library specific *Baby Play and Story Time Facilitator Workshop* resulted in 100% of participants in 2016 coming from libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres.

¹Please note this year we have compared the total number of professional development participants at workshops, forums and webinars. The 2015 Evaluation Report references the number of participants at workshops only (569)

Locations of council staff attending professional development workshops, forums or webinars 2016



A spectrum of experience among Language to Literacy workshop attendees

As was noted in 2015, a range of experience was represented in the participants who attended the Language to Literacy workshops. Staff turnover, varied experience, variation in prior training, and for some, limited understanding of early childhood development were again identified as key factors, strengthening the need for continued First 5 Forever professional development workshops and opportunities for ongoing staff training.

The 2016 Language to Literacy professional development sessions attracted participants from a broad range of experience with nearly three in 10 participants in their role for less than a year (29%), an increase on the comparable result for 2015 when this cohort represented 20%.

At the other end of the spectrum, more than two in 10 Language to Literacy participants had been in their role for over 10 years (22%, similar to the result for 2015 of 23%).

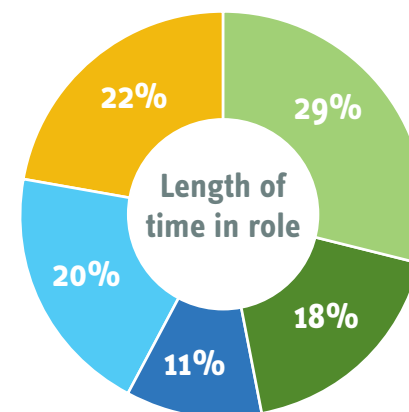
Collectively the data suggests that the professional development sessions were increasingly

successful in reaching public library staff in 2016, helping to address gaps in formal provision and strengthening the case for ongoing sustainable professional development opportunities.

‘[I appreciated] all of the contents of the session as I’m new in my role so any information is great for me to learn more.’ Language to Literacy participant



Library staff action planning with community partners during a Language to Literacy workshop



Less than a year

1 – 3 years

3 – 5 years

5 – 10 years

More than 10 years

[Base 214]

Consistently high satisfaction with provision through Language to Literacy

Feedback on the Language to Literacy 2016 sessions remained at consistently high levels, similar to 2015. 97% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I am satisfied with the session.' Sessions were considered to be 'clear and understandable' with facilitators who communicated the topic well (both 98% either agreed or strongly agreed).

Improved confidence and skills

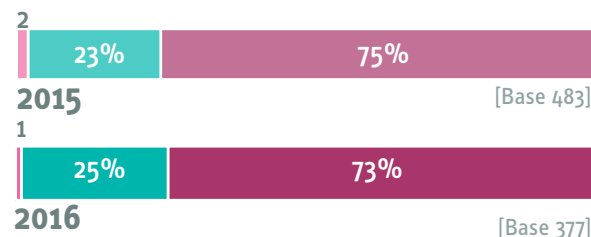
Participants rated their experience and skills in workshop topics immediately before and immediately after taking part in the Language to Literacy workshop. As was the case in 2015, data for 2016 shows an overall pattern of staff reporting an increase in confidence, in all topics post-attendance.

Deepening understanding of First 5 Forever

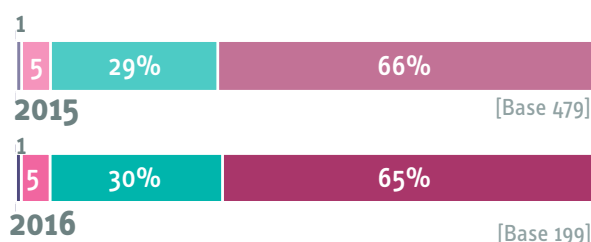
All participants reported a greater understanding of First 5 Forever aims and objectives (82%

Satisfaction with Language to Literacy workshops (2016 compared with 2015)

The session was clear and understandable



Session successfully met my learning expectations

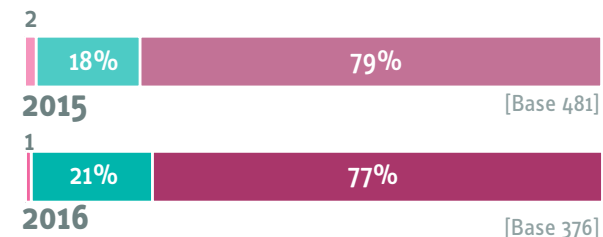


Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

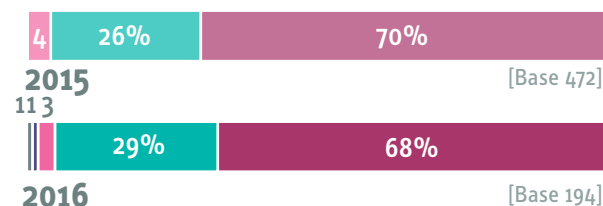
strongly agreed, the remaining 18% agreed). This outcome was one of the most frequently mentioned highlights of the Language to Literacy workshop and led to increased motivation for involvement in the initiative.

'Learning the reason why we do what we do [was my highlight].' Language to Literacy participant

The instructors successfully communicated the topic



I am satisfied with the session



'The why is important for me to be able to motivate others.' Language to Literacy participant

In addition, the majority of participants felt equipped to deliver or support First 5 Forever delivery in their community following their attendance (95% either agreed or strongly agreed).

‘Practical, easy, take-home messages to talk about with parents.’ Language to Literacy participant

‘Real life and realistic ideas to improve programming and more importantly outcomes.’
Language to Literacy participant

Participants were surveyed before and after Language to Literacy to examine the reported change in their knowledge around key First 5 Forever topics. The data to the right highlights positive changes in knowledge post workshop in the areas of brain development, encouraging language development and emergent literacy.

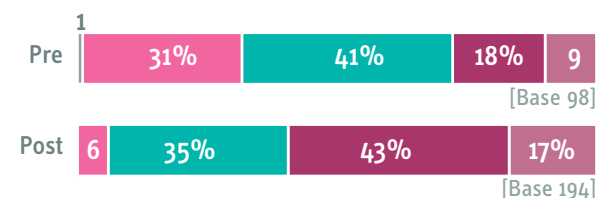
Building strong links through networking

Another highlight was the opportunity to collaborate with peers and create powerful new connections. Pooling expertise of participants from a range of fields and agencies motivated attendees, extended knowledge and started conversations with other relevant agencies.

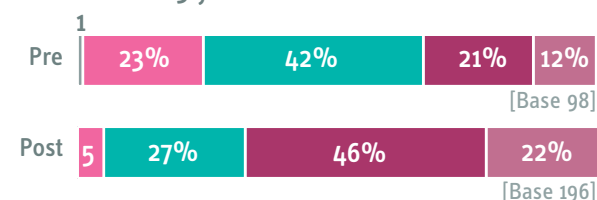
‘Brainstorming how to run a Story Time session with people from different industries [was a highlight].’ Language to Literacy participant

Knowledge in topics pre and post Language to Literacy workshop 2016

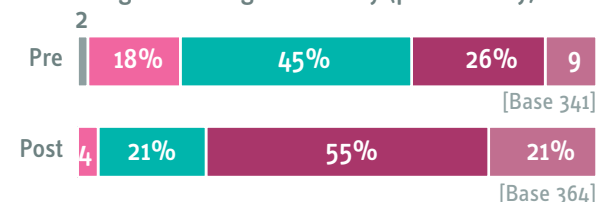
Knowledge of brain development in young children



Knowledge of encouraging language development in children 0-5 years



Knowledge of emergent literacy (pre-literacy)



Scale

1	2	3	4	5
Non existent	Limited	Basic		
Comprehensive	Extensive			

‘Engaging with other like-minded people to extend knowledge.’ Language to Literacy participant

‘Making connections with other people/ groups.’
Language to Literacy participant

Engaging, practical activities are a highlight

Many were enthusiastic about the practical, hands-on activities within the Language to Literacy workshops, particularly the opportunity to take part in putting the theory into practice among peers and gain feedback and ideas.

‘The hands on-practice of delivering key messages in our Story Time [was a highlight]’ Language to Literacy participant

‘Putting into practice what we are learning and the information to back it up.’ Language to Literacy participant

In fact, one of the key participant suggestions for improving the Language to Literacy sessions related to increased provision of practical activities.

'More role modelling of ideas' Language to Literacy participant

'It would be great to get in a few more opportunities to practice' Language to Literacy participant

'Maybe some more hands-on ... strategies for story telling / nursery rhymes' Language to Literacy participant

The most common suggested improvement related to timing

Around one in five suggestions for how the Language to Literacy workshop could be improved related to the timing of the session. Some respondents called for a shorter session or reduced length of time spent on certain elements.

'Less time spent setting the scene. Perhaps could be pre reading.' Language to Literacy participant

'Timely content – too much reinforcement ... Maybe 1 day.' Language to Literacy participant

Conversely, some participants wanted to spend more time on certain aspects and called for longer sessions. This suggests that a modular approach with some participants opting in or out of certain sessions could be useful.

'Maybe an extra day.' Language to Literacy participant

'Two full days = not as rushed.' Language to Literacy participant

Some also suggested more flexible options for taking part.

'Half [a] day done as twilight' Language to Literacy participant



Library Facebook post about staff attending State Library workshops

Practical aspects of Baby Play and Story Time highly valued

Participants at Baby Play and Story Time Facilitator sessions reported strong learning outcomes. As was the case with the Language to Literacy workshops, the majority agreed or strongly agreed that the session was clear and understandable (99%), that the instructors successfully communicated the topic (98%) and that their knowledge (94%) and confidence (92%) to deliver Baby Play and Story Time had increased as a result of taking part.

The opportunity for practical learning in a group setting was the most frequently mentioned highlight. Not only did this expose participants to new techniques, but it also facilitated networking with library peers.

‘The interactive aspect [was what I liked best] – safe space to practice.’ Baby Play and Story Time participant

‘Getting others and myself to have a go demonstrating and seeing the different ways they do it. I get inspired again after these because we don’t really see others do it at our home libraries.’ Baby Play and Story Time participant

Satisfaction with Baby Play and Story Time workshops

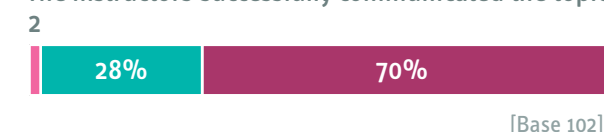
The session was clear and understandable



My knowledge and skills to deliver Baby Play and Story time sessions have increased as a result



The instructors successfully communicated the topic



My confidence to apply the knowledge and skills to deliver ... has increased as a result



Strongly disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**
Agree **Strongly agree**

‘Listening to peers and experts. Connecting with people with the same passion.’ Baby Play and Story Time participant

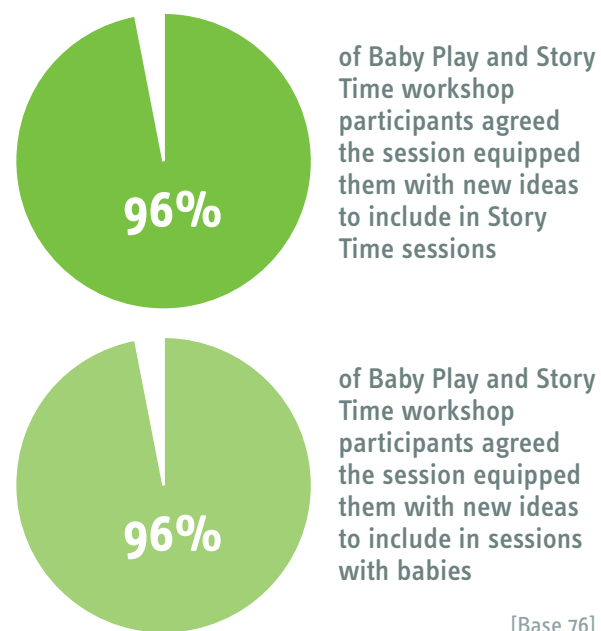
The majority (55%) of Baby Play and Story Time participants offered no suggestions on how the session could be improved, reiterating the strong outcomes and resulting high satisfaction described above. Of those who did offer a suggestion, the most frequent comments focused on having even more time to learn about practical techniques,

content sharing or more time taking part in and getting feedback on delivery.

‘More of a chance to brainstorm and problem solve common problems. More time for feedback after role-playing. Song swap.’ Baby Play and Story Time participant

More time for session examples, or smaller groups to allow for more time.’ Baby Play and Story Time participant

Evidence of Baby Play and Story Time workshops leading to new techniques



High quality sessions corresponds with calls for increased access

Access to professional development opportunities was one of the most frequently mentioned challenges by councils. Some mentioned distance as a key barrier, others were restricted by limited staff cover or coordination around delivery schedules.

'Limited regional professional development opportunities to send casual or part-time staff to [is a challenge].' Council report

'Staff cover for professional development is not eligible for funding under the current SLA.' Council report

'Staff being able to take advantage of training and other professional development opportunities that arise at short notice [is a challenge] due to programming commitments that are scheduled three months in advance.'

Council report

Strong buy-in to First 5 Forever delivery for front line staff

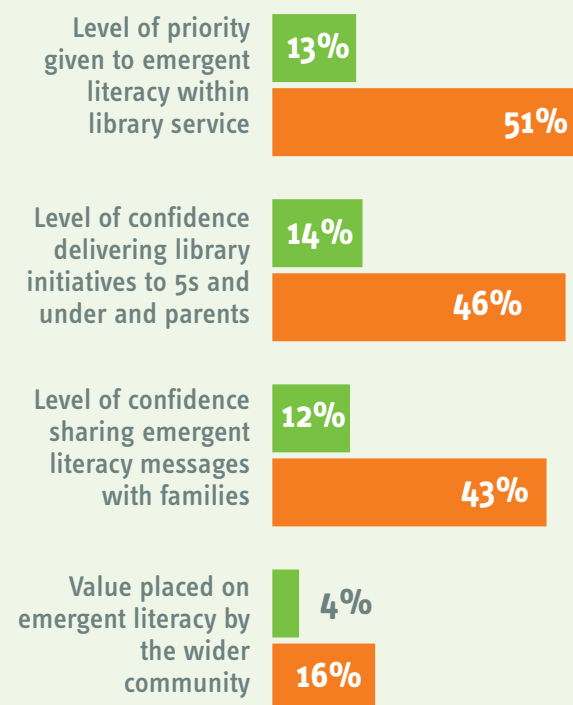
69 front line library staff responded to an online survey, representing 20 councils. The survey was aimed at front line staff (those delivering First 5 Forever programs, activities or sessions) and an invitation to take part was sent out to library managers via State Library in March 2017. 65 of 69 respondents were involved directly in delivering First 5 Forever sessions. All Queensland regions (using the Queensland Government definition) except Central West Queensland were represented in the sample.

Please note that the relatively small sample size should be taken into account when considering percentage figures.

100%

Of front line staff who took part in the survey agreed or strongly agreed that First 5 Forever was successful in their library service.

% of front line staff giving 'very high' rating pre and post First 5 Forever implementation



Pre First 5 Forever

Post involvement

[Base 69]

Front line staff delivering First 5 Forever have a strong sense of the impact that the initiative is having on the ground. In particular they feel that First 5 Forever is helping to prioritise early literacy within library services, increasing staff confidence in delivering to young children and families and sharing related messages with families to continue early literacy at home. In addition:

99%

Agree the initiative has supported libraries to provide quality programs/outreach services.

97%

Agree the initiative has increased parent, carer and community motivation and confidence to support improved emergent literacy.

97%

Agree the initiative the initiative has increased family access to initiatives and resources to support emergent literacy.

Evidence of the impact of workshops at the family level

In parent interviews it was evident that families were learning early literacy strategies from library staff. The inclusion of parent messages and early literacy strategies into library programs as a result of First 5 Forever resulted in families reporting changed behaviour in the home environment.

'[At the beginning of the session, the staff member gives] examples of ways that we could increase the amount of words we use with our kids ... and just use more words in our day-to-day, so that it's not like we actually sit down and do lessons with them, but just increasing the way we interact and talk with them.' Parent interview

'I just love how they promote just a love of reading, and letting parents know that you can do it anywhere and everywhere. It doesn't have to be at home ...you can be out and about and still do it, so parents that say that they're too busy to read ... it's not really a good excuse ... there's always a time and a place for it.' Parent interview

'At first [my confidence reading with my daughter] was really shaky, because I was focused on reading every word of the story rather than being focused on going through the pictures and making it fun, and enjoying the process rather than just wanting to get to the end. So now that I'm taking my time with it and letting her guide it, and yes, that made a huge difference for us and for her level of interest in the story as well.'

Parent interview

Recommendations

- **Consider formalising peer-to-peer training strategies through train the trainer sessions.**
Formalised strategies for internal training will not only reduce pressure on central State Library staff and increase access to training across the network, but having State Library design sessions specifically for 'training the trainer' will help maintain the quality of the sessions.
- **Ensure 'learning by doing' remains a key feature within sessions, alongside theoretical foundations and opportunities to network.**
All of the above elements resulted in staff placing a strong value in the training sessions

– making sure this dynamic is maintained in future sessions should ensure positive results continue.

- **Maximise access to professional development.**
The high quality and strong learning outcomes delivered by State Library training sessions mean that library and council staff want increased access. For example, strategies such as helping libraries accommodate training into their schedules by releasing training dates earlier or encouraging inter-council library partnerships to facilitate staff cover could help further access.
- **Consider a modular approach giving more flexibility for taking part.**
Related to increasing access, some feedback for improvements focused on the timing of sessions. Offering more options for taking part could meet a broader range of needs as well as increase access. For example, some elements of workshops could be optional, meaning that those who need, or have enough time to attend a more comprehensive session could be catered for alongside those who request a more streamlined or focused session.

Backbone organisation: collective impact

As the central body **State Library coordinates** and **administers** First 5 Forever. This initiative is delivered in partnership with local councils through the public library network of more than 320 Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs).

Aim and outcomes

State Library has been responsible for establishing, coordinating and administering the initiative funding and deliverables and has played a key role in capturing data for baseline reporting and evaluation to date.

Central role implementing First 5 Forever

The table overleaf summarises level of activity in 2016 against State Library's core deliverables, drawing on data already presented elsewhere within this report.

Professional expertise

The central coordination provided by State Library using high-level expertise provides the council network with First 5 Forever resources based on high-quality early literacy practice. State Library has consistently recognised the value, and sought the inclusion of professional expertise and feedback from a variety of disciplines in the design of First 5 Forever, and the content and delivery of strategies and resources that support the initiative.



Collated evidence of First 5 Forever data against core deliverables in 2016

Core deliverable		2014	2015	2016	Key stats
Increasing access to early literacy experiences	No. of councils programming sessions for 0–5 year olds and caregivers*	37	40	47	47 of the 49 participating councils reported programming sessions for 0–5s and caregivers in 2016 compared to 40 in 2015 and 37 pre-First 5 Forever launch in 2014. 21,500 in-library First 5 Forever sessions took place engaging 452,000 participants.
	No. of in-library First 5 Forever sessions*	14.1k	17.4k	21.5k	
	No. of attendances to in-library sessions*	404k	444.6k	452.2k	
Reaching all families with children under 5	No. of councils purchasing First 5 Forever toolkits and resources	N/A	47	39	39 councils purchased First 5 Forever resources in 2016, including 25,700 toolkits (a 35% increase on the number purchased in 2015).
	No. of toolkits purchased for distribution	N/A	19k	25.7k	
	No. of outreach events*	0.3k	1.1k	8k	Outreach activity has grown exponentially. An estimated 8,000 events took place, around 30 times more than pre-First 5 Forever in 2014. These events engaged an estimated 87,400 people, more than six times the number in 2014.
	No. of attendances at outreach events*	13.1k	38.5k	87.4k	
Collaborative partnerships and coordination	No. of community partners engaged*	N/A	625	565	Participation in reference groups increased in 2016, with two-thirds of councils involved in at least one. Around one-quarter of these groups were established as a direct result of First 5 Forever. 565 community partners were engaged by libraries through 2016 program delivery with nearly three-quarters (73%) new partnerships since First 5 Forever began.
	% of partnerships a direct result of First 5 Forever*	N/A	60%	73%	
	No. of councils participating in a reference group*	N/A	19	32	
Family and community awareness campaign	No. of sessions on First 5 Forever website	N/A	N/A	39.2k	The value (in advertising space rate) of published media articles mentioning First 5 Forever equated to \$207,200 between December 2015 and November 2016. Over the reporting period, 39,200 sessions took place on the First 5 Forever website, engaging 29,600 users who made 77,500 page views.
	Value of published media articles	N/A	N/A	\$207k	
	No. of Facebook impressions	N/A	N/A	983k	Between its launch in July 2016 and December 2016, the First 5 Forever Facebook page achieved 3,489 fans, 7,478 engagements, 5,424 click-throughs and over 983k impressions.

Core deliverable		2014	2015	2016	Key stats
Workforce capability and standards	No. of participants in State Library professional development sessions	N/A	617	673	In 2016, the First 5 Forever team provided workshops to 673 participants delivered through 20 discrete workshops in 14 locations across the state. This year, State Library also provided two forums and two webinars to 67 participants.
	No. of workshops delivered by SLQ staff	N/A	17	20	
	No. of workshop locations	N/A	13	14	
Backbone organisation	Amount of First 5 Forever funding made available to councils	N/A	\$4.5m	\$4.5m	<p>\$4.5m of funding and support made available to 72 councils in 2016. Of these, 51 councils and 9 IKCs received funding, representing 97% of the Queensland population. 49 out of 51 participating councils (excluding IKCs) returned acquittal reports within reporting deadlines in 2016.</p> <p>State Library continued implementing data capture tools used at workshops and professional development sessions, receiving over 644 completed surveys by participants. .</p>
	No. of participating councils and IKCs	N/A	56	59	

*Based on councils who supplied data each reporting year. No weighting is applied to account for 2015 being a 10-month period. Please note this year we have compared the total number of professional development participants at workshops, forums and webinars. The 2015 Evaluation Report references the number of participants at workshops only (569).

State Library guidance and coordination

As was found to be the case during the 2015 implementation, the value of the statewide coordination of First 5 Forever is acknowledged across the network. Library and council staff recognise the difference the initiative is making in their communities.

'Michelle has been a great help for our library service. She has always been willing to answer questions and help in any way she can. Thank you.' Council report

'State Library coordination has provided a good framework and safety net for the First 5 Forever program in [our region]. Resources and information provided have allowed the flexibility needed to adapt to [our] community.' Council report

Support for sustaining First 5 Forever beyond 2018

Similarly, the support for sustaining First 5 Forever beyond its four-year funding period – identified during the 2015 evaluation – remains in 2016.

'We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of children and families interacting with our services, programs and library resources through this program. I hope that funding can be extended to continue the great impact this program is having in our community.' Front line staff survey respondent

'First 5 Forever is an extremely valuable source of funding for regional libraries, as it allows us to deliver programs we could not normally do due to lack of funding. I hope this initiative will continue past 2018, as many programs will just be picking up momentum by then.' Council report

'[Our regional library network] strongly supports ongoing investment into this program. There has been a significant and positive impact on our staff in relation to their ability to facilitate conversations, activities and Rhyme Time sessions with parents and caregivers.' Council report

The issue of sustainability and future resourcing is likely to become more pertinent in 2017/18 and the level of any future government investment should shape the approach to library capability building, particularly if libraries will be required to move to a non-funded model in future.

'I believe we should start the conversation and knowledge-sharing around how we plan to deliver once the funding runs out. We can't assume it will continue. What sustainability (or otherwise) have services built into their programs and activities? Certain expectations have been created in the community. What messaging will Libraries (and SLQ) provide around withdrawal of programs and services? How can we continue to retain the high level of skill that's been built up in our staff (and our communities) over the period of this project?' Council report

Suggested improvements in centralised support

Human resourcing is a continuing challenge

When articulating challenges in delivering the First 5 Forever initiative, the most common response related to staff resourcing. This issue manifested differently within different library contexts, but there were some recurring themes including managing staff turnover, dealing with staff shortages and managing increased demands on staff through adding First 5 Forever delivery to their responsibilities. Resourcing challenges

appeared more pronounced for councils within Remote or Very Remote Queensland areas.

‘With the constraint of staff allocated hours and funds, as well as the area our Library Service covers, it is difficult to run Rhyme Time sessions at all...branches.’ Council report

‘As we are a small rural region with a limited amount of funding, the majority of our grant [is] spent on staff costs to physically prepare and facilitate the programs.’ Council report

The evidence suggests that councils have taken varying approaches to staff resources in implementing First 5 Forever. Overall, 38% of allocated funding was spent on staff wages between December 2015 and November 2016 and a further 2% on contractors / freelancers. Libraries within major cities spent more on council staff than average (39% compared to 27% in Remote or Very Remote areas) but comparatively less on freelancers / contractors (1% compared to 4% for inner and outer regional Queensland and 4% for Remote or Very Remote areas).

‘[Our] library decided at the start ... not to employ specific First 5 Forever Project Coordinators. Instead, permanent and casual staff would

be trained to form a pool of qualified and experienced staff able to work at a number of branches and provide a sustainable future for the early literacy programs.’ Council report

Councils seek greater clarity on reporting requirements at the start of the year. Some feedback from councils on State Library’s coordination of funding and acquittals suggested that data requirements should be communicated earlier and that the nature of data Councils are required to submit should be confirmed at the start of each reporting year, rather than the end. In addition, some councils suggested that reporting years should align to financial years.



I'm a Dirty Dinosaur author Janeen Brian

Guidance for allocating funds

Although not mentioned as frequently as was the case in 2015, clarity is still sought by some councils on what is considered eligible spend for the funding.

‘More suggestions about how to expend funds would be helpful.’ Council report

‘Need more flexibility in relation to what the funding can be spent [on]...the restriction... limits our ability to purchase great storytelling chairs for inside the library.’ Council report

Guidance should, however, be scaleable and continue to take into consideration local library context. One council staff member observed a positive shift towards a ‘coaching’ model in 2016 which was felt to work better within their library service.

‘We didn’t like being told in the early stages that we had to buy the toolkits. Our allocation of the Grant would have been largely spent in one fell swoop had we done that. The kits are too expensive for small-medium services. I also believe the emerging approach by SLQ of guidance and mentoring rather than a prescriptive

list of “must dos” is creating a much better relationship with public library staff. The extensive consultation and the thoughtful study on the best method of reporting is also appreciated.’ Council report

Councils want to build on knowledge sharing practices; 19 out of 49 councils made a suggestion on developing more ways to share knowledge and best practice across the network. In some cases the suggestion was simply for more of the same. It was also acknowledged that effort and drive from library staff was needed to develop this sort of dialogue, rather than the impetus being on State Library to always instigate this.

‘The ability to bring together staff more frequently to share ideas, develop strategies and develop a sustainable, reflective community of learners within the organisation [would be an improvement].’ Council report

‘This is not the solely the responsibility of SLQ but I would like to see more of our communities sharing their stories - both good and bad - on the closed [Facebook] site but also posting photos, activities, stories to the public site as well.’ Council report

Considering impact on a local-level It is clear that encouraging libraries to closely consider the needs of their local communities is paying dividends.

‘When we first started out it was discouraging that only one or two people would turn up. But, as time progressed, and after consultation with parents / carers regarding a more suitable day and time, as well as word of mouth, numbers increased greatly.’ Council report

Recommendations

- **Consider offering more guidance on staffing First 5 Forever programs to ensure a sustainable delivery model.** This guidance will need to consider multiple contexts, particularly population density and remoteness.

- **Provide more notice to councils about required acquittal data and encourage systematic record keeping throughout the year.** Some councils reported problems collating data on their delivery of First 5 Forever within specified time-periods. Councils could be encouraged to accumulate data needed throughout the year, a step which would help them monitor their delivery while also reducing the task of collating data at the end of the year.
- **Encourage a greater level of knowledge sharing across the network.** State Library should further encourage libraries to utilise platforms for sharing resources and strategies with peers.

Evaluation parameters

This study was carried out for State Library of Queensland by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

Phase 1 of the evaluation (2015) was commissioned in August 2016, with Phase 2 (2016) commissioned in February 2017.

The implementation phase evaluation was drawn from the following data sources:

Information provided by 49 councils details First 5 Forever activity December 2015 – November 2016. This data was self-reported by councils using an acquittal form designed by SLQ. Provision of this data forms a requirement of the Service Level Agreement and was submitted in late 2016 / early 2017.

Interviews with 20 parents and caregivers who had engaged with First 5 Forever in a range of different ways since the initiative launched. Interviews were mostly conducted over the phone and took place in March 2017. Participants who had indicated they were willing to provide feedback on First 5 Forever through Toolkit postcards and the First 5 Forever Facebook page.

Feedback forms completed by participants of professional development workshops, using a self-completion form designed and distributed by SLQ. Responses were gathered immediately before and after the sessions. Data within this report represents participants who attended sessions between December 2015 and November 2016.

Front line library staff survey: An online survey was sent out to participating councils aimed at

front line library staff (those delivering First 5 Forever programs, activities or sessions). 69 staff from 20 councils completed a survey between March and April 2017.

Community partner survey: An online survey was distributed by SLQ to library managers to pass on to community partners they had engaged with through First 5 Forever. The largely qualitative questionnaire received 16 responses between March and April 2017.

Secondary sources of information collated internally by SLQ including numbers of participants and locations for professional development sessions, First 5 Forever materials purchasing data, Google Analytics and media monitoring data.

For analysis purposes, on occasion councils were grouped using the geographical categories overleaf as per the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ABS).



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This report was prepared for State Library of Queensland, May 2017 by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre

Europe (Manchester) office

+44 (0) 161 839 3311
hello@mhminsight.com

Australia (Sydney) office

+61 (0) 400 123 562
sydney@mhminsight.com

New Zealand (Auckland) office

+64 (0) 9 551 7776
auckland@mhminsight.com

mhminsight.com

Grouping	Council areas			
Major cities of Australia	Brisbane Gold Coast Ipswich Logan Moreton Bay Noosa Redland Sunshine Coast			
Inner and Outer Regional Australia	Banana Bundaberg Burdekin Cairns Cassowary Coast Central Highlands Charters Towers Cherbourg	Douglas Fraser Coast Goondiwindi Gympie Hinchinbrook Isaac Livingstone Lockyer Valley	Mackay Maranoa Mareeba North Burnett Rockhampton Scenic Rim Somerset South Burnett	Southern Downs Tablelands Toowomba Townsville Western Downs Whitsunday Yarrabah
Remote and Very Remote Australia	Balonne Bulloo Burke Carpentaria Cloncurry Cook Croydon Diamantina	Doomadgee Etheridge Flinders Hope Vale Kowanyama Lockhart River Longreach Mapoon	McKinlay Mornington Mount Isa Murweh Napranum Northern Peninsula Area Palm Island Paroo	Promptaaw Quilpie Richmond Torres Torres Strait Island Weipa Winton Woorabinda Wujal Wujal



Evaluation Framework

Evaluation framework for the First 5 Forever initiative

2016

Evaluation framework

In support of First 5 Forever's drive to be a sustainable model supported by continuous improvement, the initiative is being evaluated through a range of techniques that involve consultation with councils, partners, front line library staff and parents.

Rationale: why there is a need for this initiative, the context and underpinning theory

First 5 Forever is a collective impact model operating on a statewide level. It is universal, meaning that it is aimed at all Queensland children aged 0-5 and their families.

Universal access

First 5 Forever is seeking to bring about long term, positive change to address Queensland's underperformance in children's literacy through

providing universal access and consistent quality, services, messages and resources. This will be achieved by collaborating with the local councils through the public library network and harnessing the collective impact and reach of partnering with multiple cross-sector agencies to work directly with parents and families of children 5 and under. Libraries will need to include a range of strategies that reach all sectors of the 0-5 population including the most vulnerable.

Why First 5 Forever in Queensland?

There is a large body of longitudinal evidence to suggest that early childhood development is critical in determining life-long outcomes for children¹, stressing the importance of early years literacy as a key foundation for future quality of life and attainment.

Goal: First 5 Forever's primary goal and identified stakeholders

First 5 Forever's goal is to provide strong early literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5. This is supported by a number of

Vision	Provide strong emergent literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years.
Assumption	A collective impact model, working with the public library network and partnering with cross-sector agencies, will ensure universal reach of the initiative to all children aged 0-5 and their families in Queensland.
Rationale	The development of strong literacy skills in 0-5s has been proven to have a profound impact on a child's life-chances.
Legacy	The lives of children aged 0-5 years in Queensland are improved socially, culturally and economically. Libraries and IKCs continuing to be a key proponent of early literacy for children and families in their communities.

secondary goals, to positively impact on the long term well-being of Queensland's population:

- Harness the existing network of libraries and IKCs across the state to further enhance their unique ability to directly interface with families by supporting them to provide quality programs, outreach services and maintain and establish sustainable partnerships.
- Raise community awareness of the importance of the first five years for children – especially the impact of early childhood on language, communication and early literacy.
- Increase parent, carer and community motivation, confidence and capacity to realise children's potential in language, communication and early literacy.
- Encourage a love and appreciation of books, shared reading and life-long learning.
- Increase access of children and families to programs and resources that support early literacy outcomes.
- Increase collaboration with key stakeholders to decrease gaps across existing services, reduce duplication and promote effective delivery for families of children aged 0-5 years.

Stakeholders

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) Ecological Systems Theory articulates how a child's development is affected by their social relationships and the world around them. Reference to this theory supports First 5 Forever's identified key stakeholder groups.

Four main stakeholder groups have been identified:

The child, family and kinship at the centre

The child is at the centre, together with family and kinship. It is at this fundamental level that First 5 Forever is driving positive change, recognising the crucial role that family and kinship play in a child's development.

The library network supporting family and kinship

Queensland's council network consists of over 320 libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs). First 5 Forever recognises that the library network is best placed to provide free, universal, accessible, literacy-focused programs and resources for children 5 and under and their families. This is in

addition to supporting parents and caregivers in their role as their child's first educator.

Harnessing the power of community partners and central coordination

First 5 Forever recognises the importance of new and existing cross-sector partnerships and community networks for delivering key strategies at the local level, on a universal scale. First 5 Forever encourages councils through their libraries to partner, collaborate and coordinate services with relevant local organisations at a local level to maximise impact, reduce duplication and cross promote services available locally to families.

State Library is the central body establishing, implementing and coordinating the First 5 Forever initiative. The Library's leadership role influences multiple layers through engaging Council, the Library network and their community partners.

The strategic environment as a forum for enduring positive change and sustainability

The components of the strategic environment shape beliefs and ideologies relating to early literacy foundations and the role of libraries and their partners more broadly within society. It is

within this forum that First 5 Forever is aiming to have an enduring legacy, influencing at a policy level and ensuring the sustainability of family literacy in Queensland.

Inputs: What has been invested to deliver the initiative

Queensland State Government has funded First 5 Forever with \$20 million over four years (2015-2018.) Funding is allocated to councils using a population-based cash grant methodology with weightings for demographics of children aged 5 and under, disadvantage and distance and is managed via a Service Level Agreement between State Library and Local Government. To achieve First 5 Forever's goals, there are six core deliverables, summarised below.

Chapters in the main report relate to each deliverable:

[D1] Increasing access to literacy experiences:

More places at public library programs including baby, toddler and story time sessions

[D2] Reaching all families with children under 5:

Outreach strategies, information toolkits and consistent messaging for parents / caregivers of young children that support their role as their child's first educator

[D3] Collaborative partnerships and coordination:

Local steering or advisory groups and enabling library staff to partner with local early childhood sector workers to create consistent key messages and long-term strategies

[D4] Family and community awareness campaign:

A statewide awareness campaign aimed at parents and primary care-givers

[D5] Workforce capability and standards:

Professional Development and early literacy workshops for the regions

[D6] Backbone organisation:

Collective impact initiative: State Library of Queensland central funding, resources, guidance, support and evaluation.

Outputs: Key Performance Indicators for each core deliverable

Core deliverable	KPI output metrics
Increasing access to early literacy experiences: More places at public programs including Baby, Toddler and Story Time sessions <i>See Increasing access to literacy experiences, page 12</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of participants at First 5 Forever library activities
Reaching all families with children under 5: Outreach strategies and information toolkits for parents / caregivers of young children that support their role as their child's first educator <i>See Reaching all families with children 0-5, page 22</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of toolkits distributed by libraries • No. of participants at First 5 Forever outreach activities
Collaborative partnerships and coordination: Local steering or advisory groups and enabling library staff to partner with local early childhood sector workers to create consistent key messages and long-term strategies <i>See Collaborative partnerships and coordination, page 33</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of partnerships formed by Council with community agencies as a result of First 5 Forever
Family and community awareness campaign: A statewide awareness campaign aimed at parents and primary caregivers <i>See Family and community awareness campaign, page 42</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media reach (offline and online)
Workforce capability and standards: Professional Development and emergent literacy workshops for the regions <i>See Workforce capability and standards, page 50</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of councils participating in professional development
Backbone organisation: Collective impact initiative: State Library central funding, resources, guidance, support and evaluation <i>See Backbone organisation: collective impact, page 62</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of grant funding distributed • Population coverage for First 5 Forever based on participating councils

Monitoring: How we will know it has worked?

The table to the right identifies how outputs can be measured and monitored through appropriate measurement tools.

Standards of evidence: towards demonstrating positive change. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the initiative's evaluation. Establishing causal links requires heavy investment. This evaluation is designed to capture evidence that supports First 5 Forever's contribution to positive change.

¹ Strategic Policy and Research Program (2013). Children and Young People in Queensland Snapshot 2013.' APO, p.70, available online: http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/resources/26057_26057_fullreport.pdf

Evaluation methods

Stakeholder	Evaluation method	Description
Councils	Council reporting template	Data provided by councils on library activity, spending and rationale (quantitative and qualitative).
Library staff	Survey	Library staff involved in delivering First 5 Forever and those taking part in professional development providing feedback on experience and perceptions of the initiative (mostly quantitative).
Partners	Survey	Survey designed to capture perceptions of impact from key partners, helping evidence the extent to which First 5 Forever is contributing to, and fostering joined-up partner objectives (mostly quantitative).
Parents / caregivers	Phone interview	Parent and caregivers who have engaged with a variety of First 5 Forever touch-points (quantitative and qualitative).
State Library of Queensland	Internal data	Data collated by State Library internally, including order placements for First 5 Forever resources and professional development engagement (quantitative).
	Media analytics	Media monitoring activity, online analytics such as Google Analytics (quantitative).

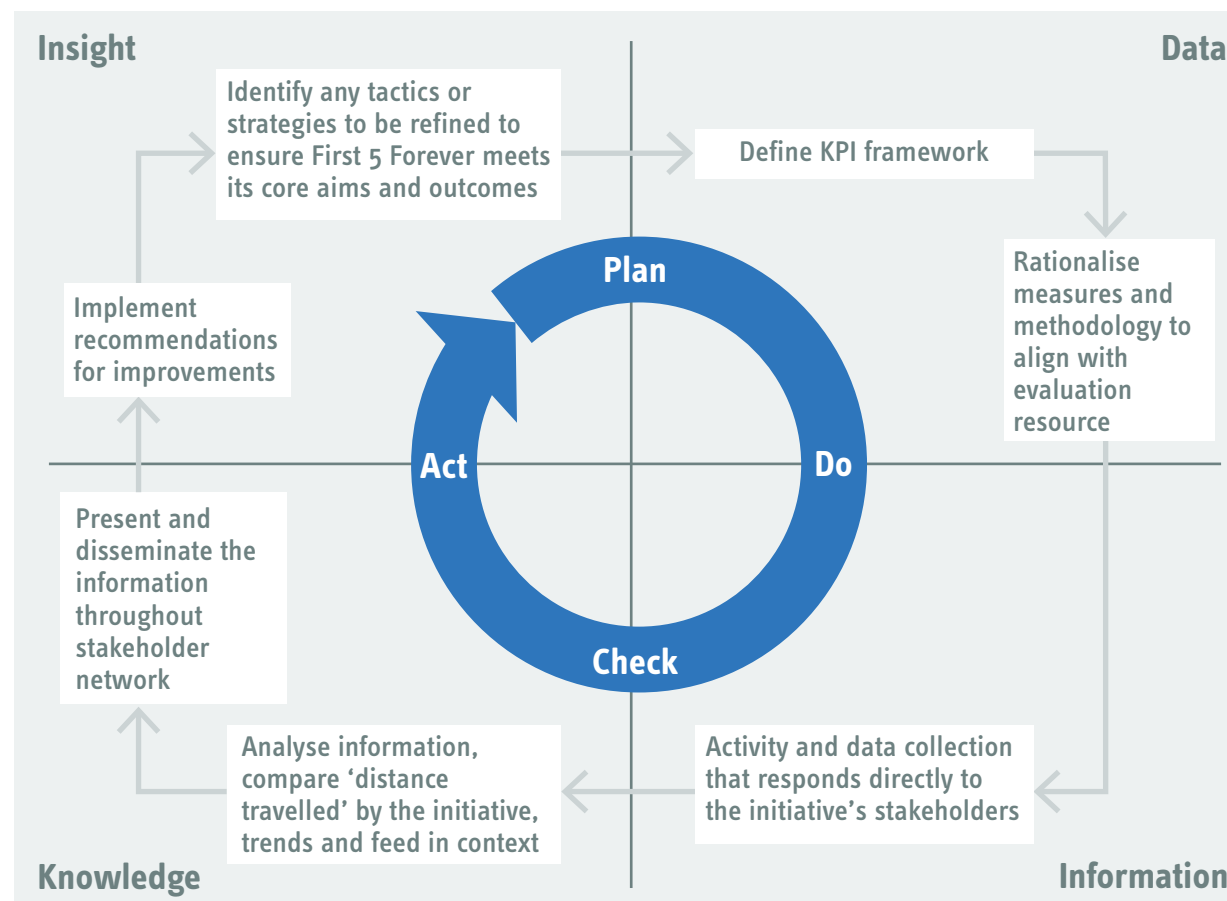
Evaluation and review

State Library is committed to adapting to the findings of the evaluation of the initiative and adopts a continuous improvement process as summarised in the model to the right. The evaluation will result in a set of strategic recommendations for consideration in future planning.

Governance

State Library will contract an external evaluator to provide recommendations through consultation with the four identified stakeholder groups. The recommendations from the evaluation will be considered by an internal State Library Project Board.

Summary of the continuous improvement process



Morris Hargreaves McIntyre is an award- winning arts management consultancy. We use consumer insight to help organisations transform their relationships with audiences.

We are passionate about understanding cultural consumers, getting to the heart of issues that matter to you and making practical recommendations.

All projects are different, but the value we add is constant: we measure our success by the impact we have on organisations we work with.



‘The biggest impact for me has been on my confidence in parenting, well, in reading as a part of parenting ... it was the first thing that I’d ever seen that let me know that it was okay to just enjoy what we were doing and not focus so much on the end goal ... 90% of that confidence in guiding her [in ongoing literacy activity] ... has been through the First 5 Forever program.’

Parent interview

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