



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

FOR

Facilitating Early Childhood Education Degree Attainment

RFA OVERVIEW

Scope of Work	First 5 Ventura County is seeking partner(s) for the implementation of strategies that facilitate associate's and bachelor's degree attainment.
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TIMELINES

August 21, 2015	Release of Request for Applications (RFA)
August 28, 2015	RSVP for Applicants Conference
September 1, 2015	Applicants Conference at First 5 Ventura County
August 21-September 18, 2015	Questions and Answers – Interested parties are invited to submit questions via e-mail to Nani Oesterle, Program Manager (noesterle@first5ventura.org). Responses will be posted on the First 5 Ventura County website (http://www.first5ventura.org).
September 18, 2015	<u>Mandatory Letter of Intent due by 10:00 a.m.</u>
September 23, 2015	<u>Applications due by 4:00 p.m.</u>
October 15, 2015	Intent to Award Recommendation to Commission

ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE PREPARATION

One of First 5 Ventura County's priorities is for all children to enter school ready to learn. It is an urgently pressing challenge in light of the persistent learning and readiness gap between children living in poverty and their more advantaged peers. High-quality early learning experiences are proven to be an effective strategy for addressing this school readiness gap before it becomes an academic achievement gap in later years. But, no early learning program can succeed without teachers who establish warm and caring relationships with children, light the fires of curiosity and love of learning, and foster their development and readiness for school¹.

A well-prepared and nurturing Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce is at the core of high-quality early learning programs. Educated and skilled teachers provide the experiences that nurture children's curiosity, foster learning, and improve educational outcomes for young children. Research suggests that ECE teachers who have been educated on par with K-12 teacher standards are more effective in promoting children's learning. However, too few ECE programs are able to recruit qualified teachers with this level of education and the skills and knowledge that are acquired with college coursework and specialized training.

The shortage of highly qualified ECE teachers – those with associate's (AA) and bachelor's (BA) degrees in Early Childhood Education or a closely related field – is becoming more prevalent as public funding for preschool spaces increases and the State's new Transitional Kindergarten program attracts the most educated ECE teachers. At the same time, publicly as well as privately funded ECE programs are eagerly trying to achieve the highest levels of quality as measured by California's 5-Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) matrix, requiring programs to have lead teachers with AA/BA degrees in Early Childhood Education, or a closely related field.

As a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant (RTT-ELC) county, First 5 Ventura County has been working with its partners to identify and address systemic barriers to ECE degree completion and teacher preparation. Supplemental funding from the RTT-ELC grant provides this opportunity to build capacity and infrastructure within Institutions of Higher Education to advance ECE teacher preparation.

During FY 2014-15, First 5 Ventura County conducted interviews with local stakeholders, including representatives from community colleges, public and private universities, ECE Stipend program staff, ECE program administrators and students to better understand barriers to completing coursework necessary for attaining AA/BA degrees in Early Childhood Education, or a closely related field. The top barriers cited by interviewees are consistent with literature from Dr. Marcy Whitebook and other experts at the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley, on barriers that ECE students face on a national scale:

- Not able to complete math coursework required for graduation
- Financial barriers, including lack of understanding and utilization of available financial aid
- Limited access to academic counseling specific to ECE degree completion; counselors' lack of knowledge regarding ECE degree requirements
- Interpersonal challenges such as limited social support, lack of motivation or feelings of empowerment, and lack of comfort and familiarity with college/university campus settings and expectations

¹ Whitebook, M., Gomby, D., Bellm, D., Sakai, L., & Kipnis, F. (2009). Preparing teachers of young children: The current state of knowledge, and a blueprint for the future. Executive Summary. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, University of California at Berkeley

- Inadequate English writing skills; language barriers
- Lack of employer support
- Limited computer skills

To address the growing shortage of highly educated ECE teachers, First 5 Ventura County has partnered with the Ventura County Office of Education since 2008 on implementing the ECE Stipend Project, a project aimed at supporting ECE professionals in continuing their education towards AA/BA degree attainment. While to date more than 135 individuals have successfully completed AA or BA degrees as a result of this program, additional strategies are needed to facilitate degree attainment and support a well-prepared, well-educated ECE workforce.

SCOPE OF WORK

First 5 Ventura County is requesting applications from Institutions of Higher Education interested in participating in First 5 Ventura County's RfA for Facilitating Early Childhood Education Degree Attainment. The RfA's goal is to:

- Address barriers to AA/BA degree attainment for students with a major in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or a closely related field.
- Create new and innovative educational pathways, or further build on programs or coursework that facilitate degree attainment and prepare ECE students to enter the workforce with the knowledge and competencies related to high quality programs and better child outcomes.

This funding opportunity is not intended to provide one-time, direct services to students, but rather to design, develop, or coordinate sustainable strategies or programs that reduce barriers to higher education degree attainment. Institutions of Higher Education are invited to submit applications that articulate how one-time investments might help to implement systemic solutions or build internal capacity with long-term impacts beyond the grant period.

The selected funded partner(s) will be responsible for designing strategies that address one or both of the above goals. The grant period may be used to plan and develop effective, sustainable strategies. However, this is not considered a planning grant. While applicants may not be able to fully implement the proposed strategies during the grant period, the proposal must include a timeline for implementation and address the requirement of sustaining the implementation of these strategies in subsequent year(s) without additional First 5 funding.

Examples of strategies include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Design a cohort model for ECE students pursuing an AA/BA degree
- Develop ECE-specific curriculum for students to improve success with math coursework
- Implement academic or social supports that increase the likelihood of successful course completion, such as math tutoring or peer mentoring
- Develop tools to help students navigate their higher education degree options in Ventura County, including program requirements, deadlines and financing
- Implement training modules for college counselors around ECE degree requirements
- Develop strategies to facilitate smooth transition from an associate's degree program to a bachelor's degree program

Priority will be given to:

- Programs based on research and best practices for effective education for the ECE workforce
- Programs with measurable outcomes, e.g. accelerated degree completion
- Programs that have a direct impact on accelerated degree attainment, such as an ECE-relevant unit-bearing math course counting towards degree completion, cohort models, etc.
- Proposals that have long-term operating and sustainability plans

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Recent and long-term experience offering college coursework in Ventura County leading to AA/BA degree attainment
- Knowledge and expertise with educational pathways for Early Childhood Education students
- Ability to enter into a contract with First 5 Ventura County and implement the Scope of Work as defined in this RFA on or about November 1, 2015
- Ability to comply with First 5 Ventura County's contract provisions (refer to boilerplate agreement), policy on funding faith-based organizations, and Principles on Equity

AVAILABLE FUNDS/FUNDING TERM

The total maximum funding available for degree attainment capacity building is \$75,000 for the funding term November 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016.

The Commission intends to make an award to one or more agencies.

WHO MAY APPLY

Eligible applicants include local Community Colleges, Ventura County Community College District, and public and private universities serving ECE students who reside in Ventura County. Institutions of Higher Education may submit a joint application.

MATCH REQUIREMENT

Applicants are required to provide a minimum of 15% in matching funds of the Commission funds request. The term "match" refers to the resources (cash or in-kind) used to accomplish a proposed scope of work.

- These resources may be in the form of cash or in-kind and must be dedicated solely to the proposed project and may not already be claimed by another unrelated project/ funding stream.
- Matching funds must be provided by a source other than local or state Proposition 10.
- The dollars that may be counted towards the project must be within the contract term.
- The matching funds must be verifiable and tracked for the project's activity period.
- Funds must be committed or pending at the time the application is submitted. An intent to raise funds in the future is not acceptable.

Matching sources may be foundations, corporations, public or private institutions, individual contributions, fund-raising events and products, membership income, government grants and contracts, and in-kind support. As an example of an in-kind match, funded partners can provide space as an in-kind contribution.

If at the end of the contract/project period, the project is unable/did not meet the minimum match requirement, the Commission reserves the right to reduce the proportional amount of funds provided to the project.

SUPPLANTING OF PROP 10 FUNDS

Prop 10 funds received from First 5 Ventura County may be only used only to fund new or expand existing levels of service. Moneys are prohibited to be used to fund any existing levels of service. No funds shall be used to supplant state or local General Fund money for any purpose, pursuant to the Revenue and Taxation Code Section 30131.4.

RFA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

A voluntary Applicants Conference will be held on **Tuesday, September 1, 2015, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**, at First 5 Ventura County, 2580 E Main Street, Suite 203, Ventura, CA, to review the content of this RfA with potential applicants and to address questions.

RSVPs for the Applicants Conference are requested by Friday, August 28, 2015 to Kathy Rangel at krangel@first5ventura.org or (805) 648-9990.

Questions regarding this RfA will be answered during the Applicants Conference. Additional questions regarding this RfA will be accepted by e-mail, in writing, or by fax through **4:00 p.m. on September 18, 2015**. Please use "RfA – ECE Question" as the subject heading and send all questions to First 5 Ventura County by e-mail to noesterle@first5ventura.org

Questions and the Commission's response will be posted on the Commission's website: www.first5ventura.org. To be fair to all applicants, the Commission is not able to answer individual questions pertaining to this Request for Applications via telephone.

MANDATORY LETTER OF INTENT

All organizations intending to submit an application are **REQUIRED** to submit the Letter of Intent form (Attachment A) by **10:00 a.m. on Friday, September 18, 2015**, to the Commission indicating that they intend to submit a proposal in response to this RfA.

While submitting a Letter of Intent does not obligate an organization to submit an application, applications will not be accepted from organizations that do not submit a Letter of Intent.

Letters of Intent may be sent by e-mail, mail, or hand-delivered to the Commission at the following address:

Nani Oesterle, Program Manager
FIRST 5 VENTURA COUNTY
RFA – Facilitating Early Childhood Education Degree Attainment
2580 E. Main Street, Suite 203
Ventura, CA 93003
E-mail: noesterle@first5ventura.org

Regardless of how Letters of Intent are submitted, letters must be received by First 5 Ventura County by 10:00 a.m., on Friday, September 18, 2015.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Proposals (Application Form – Attachment B) may be hand-delivered, mailed, or sent via email. Regardless of how proposals are submitted, **proposals must be received by First 5 Ventura County by 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 23, 2015.** Late submissions cannot be accepted. **Electronic submission of the proposal is preferred.**

An “application” is defined as containing:

- Completed Cover Sheet (Attachment B)
- Narrative Response to the Questions (Attachment B)
- Department/Agency Organizational Chart
- Resumes of all staff expected to work on this project, delineating roles of each staff member in the proposed project.
- Supporting documents, such as
 - List of your Board of Directors (if applicable)
 - Letters of support from relevant partners (if applicable)

An applicant may need to provide the following supporting material(s) upon Commission request:

- Certification agreeing to operate facilities that are tobacco free
- Certification agreeing to collaborate with First 5 Ventura County’s Neighborhoods for Learning (NFLs)
- 501(c)3 designation letter (if a nonprofit organization) or Business License
- Last year’s financial statements (audited, if available)
- Last year’s form 990 (if a nonprofit organization) or tax return (if applicable)

The name of the applicant agency should appear at the top of each page. Pages must be consecutively numbered, including all attachments. A signature is required on the original proposal package.

Submit to:

Nani Oesterle, Program Manager
FIRST 5 VENTURA COUNTY
RfA – Facilitating Early Childhood Education Degree Attainment
2580 E. Main Street, Suite 203
Ventura, CA 93003
E-mail: noesterle@first5ventura.org

An application may be returned without consideration for the following reasons:

- The applicant did not submit the required Letter of Intent
- The application is received after 4:00 p.m. on September 23, 2015
- The application does not follow the required format (Attachment B)

The Commission may, at its sole discretion, reject any or all applications submitted in response to this RfA. The Commission also reserves the right to cancel this RfA at its sole discretion, at any time prior to execution of an agreement or contract. The Commission shall not be liable for any costs incurred in connection with the preparation of any application submitted in response to this RFA.

APPLICATION EVALUATION PROCESS & SELECTION CRITERIA

A community review panel of experts in funding and ECE workforce issues, along with involved citizens, will be responsible for reviewing all full applications, evaluating them against the established criteria, and making funding recommendations. Funding awards will be considered using the following criteria: scoring results; funding priorities; sustainability plan; overall strength of project plan. A minimum score of 80 points will be required for a proposal to be eligible for funding. A score of 80 points or higher, however, does not guarantee that a proposal will be selected for funding. Final funding decisions will be made by the Commission.

The Commission will use the following criteria to evaluate applications received in response to this RfA:

1. To what extent does the applicant have relevant past experience with offering college coursework in Ventura County leading to AA/BA degree attainment? To what extent are the agency's mission, history, management structure and major accomplishments pertinent to the qualifications to be the contractor for implementing the scope of work? 10 points
2. To what extent does the applicant propose realistic and effective strategies for addressing the goal(s) defined in the scope of work? Is the proposed work plan and timeline for completing the work by no later than June 30, 2016 realistic? Are programs based on research and best practices for effective education for the ECE workforce? Do programs have measurable outcomes, e.g. accelerated degree completion? Does the proposed program or strategy have a direct impact on accelerated degree attainment? 30 points
3. To what extent does the applicant have staff with qualifications/capability for implementing the scope of work, including work experience and professional activities? 15 points
4. To what extent are the strategies or program designed, developed, or coordinated through this grant funding sustained past June 2016? 25 points
5. To what extent does the applicant have the ability to leverage matching funds that would be dedicated to administering this project? Is there a clear description of the matching funds sources (cash and in-kind support) available for this project? 10 points
6. To what extent is the proposed budget cost-effective and appropriate for the scope of work? 10 points

ANTICIPATED AWARD DATE

October 15, 2015

PROPOSAL AWARDS/NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO AWARD

All applicants will be notified of their application status in writing.

CONTRACT AWARD APPEAL PROCEDURES

An applicant whose proposal was not funded can file a Notice of Appeal. Grounds for appeal is limited solely to contest a procedural aspect of the review process.

Written appeals must be directed to the Commission's Executive Director and filed within 10 calendar days following notification of grant awards. Attempts will be made to resolve the appeal at that level. Subsequent appeals may be made to the Commission if the organization is not satisfied with the Executive Director's decision. Such appeals must be made within 10 calendar days from receipt of the Executive Director's decision. An appeal hearing will be conducted and the applicant will receive written notification of the Commission's decision within 15 days. The Commission has final authority on all appeals and the decision of the Commission is final.

DRAFT



LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) TO APPLY FOR FIRST 5 VENTURA FUNDS

First 5 Ventura County (F5VC) announces the availability of funding for Facilitating Early Childhood Education Degree Attainment. The eligibility of applicants, program requirements, and general information about who may apply is explained in the Request for Application (RfA).

All eligible Institutions of Higher Education intending to submit an application are **required** to submit the Letter of Intent (LOI) Form (Attachment A). LOI's may be hand-delivered, mailed, or sent via email. Regardless of how LOI's are submitted, **LOI's must be received by First 5 Ventura County no later than 10:00 a.m. on Friday, September 18, 2015.**

While submitting a Letter of Intent does not obligate an organization to submit an application, applications will not be accepted from organizations that do not submit a Letter of Intent.

Higher Education Institution Name: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Address: [Click here to enter text.](#)

City: [Click here to enter text.](#) Zip Code: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Contact person: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Phone: [Click here to enter text.](#) Email: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Please check one:

Our Institution of Higher Education **will** participate in F5VC's RFA and plans to:

- Submit an application as a sole applicant
- Submit an application in partnership with another Ventura County Higher Education Institute. *Please list the name of your partner(s):* [Click here to enter text.](#)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

DUE BY 10:00 A.M. ON Friday, September 18, 2015

Submit to: First 5 Ventura County, 2580 E. Main Street, Suite 203, Ventura, CA 93003
E-mail: noesterle@first5ventura.org



**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS
Facilitating Early Childhood Education Degree Attainment**

COVER SHEET

Applicant Agency Name: _____

Address, City and ZIP: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Date of Application: _____ Year Agency Founded: _____

Total Organizational Budget (or ECE Department if known) for Current Year:

Amount requested: \$_____

Certification and Assurance

I certify that the information provided in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, complete and accurate and that I am legally authorized to commit the organization to the activities described herein.

Authorized Signature

Typed Name and Title

Date

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 23, 2015

APPLICATION FORMAT: Answer the questions, using 8 ½" x 11" white paper, 11-point font, 1-inch margins, within a **maximum of 8 pages** (not including the budget and line item justification or supporting materials).

The name of the applicant agency should appear at the top of each page. Pages must be consecutively numbered, including all attachments. A signature is required on the original proposal package.

Each question will be scored on its own merits. Please make sure each question is answered separately even if questions appear repetitious.

1. Describe any relevant past experience and activities with offering college coursework in Ventura County leading to AA/BA degree attainment. Briefly describe your agency's mission, history, management structure and major accomplishments that are pertinent to the qualifications to be the contractor for implementing this scope of work.
2. Describe your proposed strategies for addressing the goal(s) defined in the scope of work, with a proposed work plan and timeline for completing the work by no later than June 30, 2016. Describe how the:
 - Proposed program or strategy is based on research and best practices for effective education of the ECE workforce
 - Proposed program or strategy result in measurable outcomes
 - Proposed program or strategy directly impacts accelerated degree attainment
3. Describe the qualifications, roles and responsibilities of program staff who will be hired or assigned to carry out this project.
4. Describe how the strategies or program designed, developed, or coordinated through this grant funding will be sustained past June 2016.
5. Describe your agency's ability to leverage matching funds which would be dedicated to administering this project. Describe the sources of the matching funds, including cash from other funding sources and in-kind support, dedicated solely to this project. Indicate the amount of matching funds that will be contributed towards this project.
6. Include a budget with all costs clearly delineated for implementing the scope of work as described above.

A complete application is defined as containing:

- Completed Cover Sheet (Attachment B)
- Narrative Response to the Questions on Attachment B
- Department/Agency Organizational Chart

ATTACHMENT B

- Resumes of all staff expected to work on this project, delineating roles of each staff member in the proposed project.
- Supporting documents, such as
 - List of your Board of Directors (if applicable)
 - Letters of support from relevant partners (if applicable)

Upon request by First 5 Ventura County, applicant may be required to submit one or more of the following:

- Certification agreeing to operate facilities that are tobacco free
- Certification agreeing to collaborate
- 501(c)3 designation letter (if a nonprofit organization) or Business License
- Last year's financial statements (audited, if available)
- Last year's form 990 (if a nonprofit organization) or tax return (if applicable)

The original signed application may be e-mailed, mailed or hand-delivered, but regardless of the postmark date, **must be received by the Commission no later than 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 23, 2015. E-mail submissions are strongly encouraged.**