

Questions & Answers Received through January 25, 2009

First 5 Merced County Requests for Proposals

The following questions and answers may assist you in responding to the Requests for Proposals (RFP) recently released by First 5 Merced County.

Questions Relevant for BOTH RFP's (Desired Outcomes and General Grants Program):

1. Do you have to stay in the range of \$50,000 - \$300,000 for Desired Outcomes or \$25,000 to \$75,000 for General Grants or can we go below the lowest amount? Does it disqualify you if you don't meet the range of funding?

Proposals can be submitted for any amount of funds below the maximum stated allowable amount. Proposals for beyond the maximum amount will be considered non-compliant with the RFP instructions.

2. Can a proposal be written for an 18 month period or do we have to write two 18 month proposals to cover the three years and do they have to be written at the same time?

Proposals can be written for any period of duration up to three years. Proposals should be written based on the estimated time needed to carry out the program successfully to achieve its stated goals.

3. Are there any addenda to the RFP and will they be sent out, emailed, and posted on the web site?

Yes, an addendum was released announcing two additional pre-proposal conferences to assure prospective applicants have sufficient opportunity to seek clarity on the RFPs. See the First 5 Merced County website (under Funding Opportunities) for details.

This addendum, and any future addenda, will be posted to the First 5 Merced County website and disseminated to all to whom an RFP was disseminated and/or and attended a pre-proposal conference.

4. What is the makeup of the review committee?

Please refer to the RFP (Evaluation Criteria section) for information on the review committees for both RFPs. The review committee may include representatives from outside the county, from First 5 staff, and from the Commission.

5. With the possibility of available funding going down, what will happen to the funding of these RFP's?

First 5 Merced County reserves the right to cancel or discontinue its RFPs at any time based on any of several factors, including a lack of available funding. If any change in funding occurs, all Applicants will be informed of the impact, if any, on the RFP process.

6. What about smaller non-profit agencies competing against the larger organizations, how will we be competitive in our RFP's?

The size of an applicant agency, in and of itself, is not a weighted review criterion in the scoring of proposals for either RFP. Proposals will be reviewed based on the explicit criteria listed in the Evaluation Criteria section of each RFP, with overall funding recommendations based on the ability of a proposal to fulfill the intent of the RFP.

7. When the review committee goes over the application proposal can they look at just one aspect of the proposal and not all of it and can we anticipate this to happen?

All portions of proposals that are compliant with RFP instructions will be reviewed in their entirety. First 5 reserves the right through the RFP process to consider all or portions of submitted proposals or modifications to submitted proposals for funding recommendation. Refer to the Discussion with Responsive Applicants Regarding Proposals portion within the Information to Applicants section of the RFP.

8. Do we need any other legal attachments with the proposals or letters of support or collaboration?

No letters of support are required. No attachments should be submitted other than those specifically requested in the RFP instructions. Plans to collaborate should be described in appropriate portions of the proposal, as requested.

9. Speak to the issue of supplantation and please explain how currently funded organizations in the program can submit a proposal?

Proposition 10 (First 5) dollars cannot be used to supplant (i.e., backfill) funds for existing services supported through local or state general fund dollars. Current First 5-funded organizations' contracts for services (in most cases) end June 30, 2009. Since proposals for the RFPs cannot start prior to July 1, 2009, newly funded services will not supplant 'existing' services since current contracts will have already sunsetted.

10. What constitutes a "need" of the community; what does this include and give an example?

A "need" is any type of condition or factor that, when addressed, can enhance the ability of children 0 to 5 to develop optimally and be prepared to succeed in school. Needs can exist at multiple levels of intervention as described in the RFP, as shown in First 5 Merced County's Conceptual Framework.

For the RFP for the General Grants Program, Applicants may propose interventions for any need of their choosing. For the RFP for Desired Outcomes, proposals must be for interventions that directly and specifically pursue the three stated Desired Outcomes.

11. It seems as if the significant difference between the Desired Outcomes RFP and the General Grants RFP lies in the integration of services that is intended with the Desired Outcomes RFP. Is this right?

A primary distinction between the two RFPs (besides the broader nature of the General Grants RFP vs. the focused Desired Outcomes RFP) is that the RFP for Desired Outcomes

intends to support programs within a collaborative framework whereby multiple contractors are working in concert, toward an identified set of goals (i.e., the Desired Outcomes). Proposals will be reviewed on their individual merits, as well as how they contribute to the intended broader framework of services.

12. At the time we write the RFP, should we intend to bring in two or three of our collaborative partners with a letter of intent to show the collaboration? Will collaboration be rewarded?

No letters of intent are requested nor should be submitted. You may state your intent to collaborate within your proposal narrative, as applicable. In and of itself, collaboration in proposals will not be rewarded with higher scoring. Formal collaboration (e.g., through proposed subcontracting) should be proposed when it directly benefits the implementation of the proposed interventions and program goals.

13. Do we write what we want to do or do we write to accommodate what you think should be accomplished?

The answer depends on which RFP you are responding to: For the RFP for Desired Outcomes, interventions should be proposed that directly and specifically pursue Desired Outcomes 1, 2, and/or 3. For the RFP for the General Grants Program, proposed interventions can respond to any needs and activities you feel are warranted that are in alignment with the intent of the RFP.

14. If I have a track record of working with other agencies, should I add this to the RFP?

Yes, to the extent it is responsive to the requested information in the proposal narrative instructions.

15. Would it strengthen the proposal to choose one geographic location over another or a population group over another in the community?

There are no geographic locations for which funding is being prioritized under either of First 5's RFPs.

The RFP for Desired Outcomes identifies a Service Population of Interest that should be referred to by prospective applicants. This RFP, additionally, will support interventions to achieve Desired Outcomes 1, 2, and 3, which are the prioritized First 5 goals for the entire county, not just in one portion of the county or another. Proposals are encouraged that are in alignment with this aim.

16. Because of the start up dates, not all starting at the same time, could there be a ramp up cost in the first year and then lower requested funding in the second and third years?

Proposed budget requests should match the needs of the program over the intended duration. It is reasonable to expect funding needs will vary from year to year based on the evolving stages of the program's implementation.

Questions Relevant to the RFP Desired Outcomes:

17. When applicants do a proposal for Desired Outcome #1, do we include DO #4 and #5?

The RFP for Desired Outcomes intends to solicit proposals with interventions that directly and specifically aim to achieve Desired Outcomes 1, 2, and/or 3. Proposals may pursue one or more of these three outcomes.

In addition, refer to the RFP instructions for the Proposal Narrative, Section E, Integration Efforts to Support First 5 Desired Outcomes. This section requests applicants to identify how proposed programs “support, strengthen, compliment, extend, relate to, or otherwise advance the pursuit of” any of the other (5) First 5 Desired Outcomes (that the proposed program is not already directly pursuing).

18. Do existing contractors participating in the State Initiatives such as Power of Preschool, School Readiness Initiative, or Children’s Health Initiative need to apply for funds through the RFP if they hope to continue or expand/enhance their current activities beyond June 30, 2009?

Yes. No separate funding opportunities for current state initiatives will be available apart from the current RFPs. Instead, First 5 intends to fund proposed interventions (that may be presently funded under the state initiatives) that are aligned with the intent of the RFPs through the released RFPs, particularly the RFP for Desired Outcomes.

Thus, continued First 5 Merced County participation in the state initiatives, is dependent on the number and nature of qualifying proposals submitted in response to the released RFPs that meet both 1) the intent of the RFPs, and 2) the minimum participation requirements for the state initiatives.

We thus encourage applicants to review the RFP for Desired Outcomes and submit proposals for appropriate interventions. We particularly suggest you consider enhancing, modifying, or otherwise shifting currently funded activities in whatever ways may be needed to be most CONSISTENT WITH THE INTENT OF THE RFP, since this is what will drive the scoring and review of the proposals.

First 5 Merced County most certainly wishes to build upon its past and current programmatic investments which are in alignment with First 5’s new strategic plan Desired Outcomes, and the released RFP is the mechanism by which this will occur.

19. School Readiness (SR) is closing so in writing the RFP do you write as if you have never had SR funding or are we writing as a supplemental to what you have been doing with SR to do some of the same things that SR was doing?

Refer to the response to the prior question.

20. Since we are proposing our services without knowing what the broader framework of services [to pursue the Desired Outcomes] will be, how do we describe how we will collaborate with others?

Refer to the RFP section entitled Integration Efforts to Support First 5 Desired Outcomes. This section of the instructions outlines the information requested.

21. Does the RFP for Desired Outcomes have more emphasis on system and organizational change and less emphasis on direct services?

There is no priority placed on one type of proposed program over another. However, it is presumed that a mix of programs across various levels of intervention will be required to fulfill the intent of the RFP and the Desired Outcomes. First 5 encourages applicants to make use of the full latitude offered within the RFP to seek funding for a broad range of programs from direct services to systems and policy level work (see Intervention Approaches to Be Supported section of the RFP).

22. Explain and clarify the funding ranges that are available for the Desired Outcomes?

Desired Outcomes proposals may be submitted that request any amount of funds up to a maximum of \$300,000 per year for a maximum of three years duration. The funding ranges are provided to convey a sense of the likely size of awards to be made through this RFP. First 5 reserves the right to fund above or below the stated range or maximum.