

**APPENDIX 4: First 5 LA Research and Evaluation Quality Assurance
Guiding Principles and Dispute Resolution Process**

**RESEARCH AND EVALUATION:
GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

This document describes the vision and guiding principles of the First 5 LA Research and Evaluation department. The First 5 LA Research and Evaluation Quality Assurance committee is charged with ensuring that any documents produced under contract with First 5 LA R&E adhere to these standards.

- I. The Vision and Mission of the Research and Evaluation Department**
- II. Guiding Principles for Research and Evaluation**
- III. The Quality Assurance Process**
- IV. Quality Assurance Dispute Resolution**

I. The Vision and Mission of Research and Evaluation Department

Vision: Our stakeholders use data, knowledge, and tools to make decisions, change policies, and ultimately improve the lives of children.

Research and Evaluation Mission:

- 1. RE/IT facilitates the generation and use of data, knowledge, and tools that are used by our internal and external stakeholders to make decisions, change policies and ultimately improve the lives of children.
- 2. RE/IT staff become leaders and specialists in knowledge generation and management towards capacity building and policy-making at all levels through a set of integrated policy actions and activities.

II. Guiding Principles for Research and Evaluation¹

A. Systematic Inquiry: Evaluators (including First 5 LA staff, contractors and/or grantee evaluators) conduct systematic, data-based inquiries.

- 1. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the evaluative information they produce, evaluators should choose an evaluation method appropriate to the study goals, and adhere to the highest technical standards appropriate to the methods they use
- 2. There should be sufficient transparency in the communication of methods and approaches to allow stakeholders to understand, interpret and critique

¹ These principles draw heavily on the American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles for Evaluators: <http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciples.asp>

the evaluator's work. The evaluator should make clear the limitations of an evaluation and its results.

B. Competence: Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.

1. The contractor or internal evaluation team should collectively possess the knowledge, skills and experience appropriate to undertake the tasks proposed in the evaluation.
2. The contractor or internal evaluation team shall be subject to an internal First 5 Los Angeles Quality Monitoring (QM) committee review, and will respond in a timely manner to questions and revisions suggested by the QM review committee at any stage of the contract process, including study design and the final report.

C. Integrity/Honesty: Evaluators display honesty and integrity in their own behavior, and attempt to ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.

1. Internal evaluation team and contractors are honest with relevant stakeholders concerning the costs, tasks, deliverables, limitations of methods, scope of results, and uses of data.
2. Contractors shall perform their duties in the most cost-effective manner possible to ensure that public money is being used responsibly
3. The Research Analyst should closely monitor costs and deliverables to ensure that the contractor is honestly adhering to the approved budget and scope of work.
4. Evaluators should disclose any roles or relationships that might pose a real or apparent conflict of interest prior to accepting an assignment.
5. As early as possible, the evaluator should record and report all changes to the original negotiated project plans, and the reasons for them, including any possible impacts that could result.
6. Evaluators should represent the findings of the evaluation accurately, and ensure that any contractors have the explicit freedom to do so as well.
7. First 5 Los Angeles will abide by AB 109 and SB 35 as they pertain to the contractor solicitation process

D. Cultural Competence and Respect for People: Evaluators respect the dignity and self-worth of respondents, program participants, clients, and other evaluation stakeholders.

1. Ensure that the evaluation team collectively demonstrates cultural, demographic, community and regional competence and uses appropriate evaluation strategies, measures, and skills to work with culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
2. Seek to maximize the benefits and reduce any unnecessary burdens that might occur from an evaluation.
3. Foster social equity in evaluation, when feasible, so that those who give to the evaluation may benefit in return. Always communicate evaluation findings back to study participants and other stakeholders.

E. Confidentiality and competition: Abide by current professional ethics, standards, and regulations regarding confidentiality, informed consent, and potential risks or harms to participants.

1. Abide by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) by ensuring the privacy of individuals' health-related information. This should include obtaining study participant's signed consent for disclosure of health information, participant's accessibility to health records and documentation of disclosures of health information, and participant's ability to correct inaccurate information.
2. Obtain approval from an independent Institutional Review Board (IRB) for any evaluation study involving primary data collection.
3. Any deliverables involving primary data will not be delivered to First 5 Los Angeles in an identifiable form unless explicitly determined by the department director to be appropriate

F. Utilization focused:

1. Evaluators (including First 5 LA staff, contractors and/or grantee evaluators) should articulate study goals, intended users (i.e., primary audience) and intended use for evaluation findings to the extent possible at the outset of a study.
2. Evaluators should explore with stakeholders the shortcomings and strengths of both the proposed evaluation questions and approaches.
3. Monitoring activities will be distinct from learning-focused activities
4. Dissemination plans for timely sharing of information should be developed and include opportunities for reflection, feedback from intended users, and potential refinements to evaluation activities in response to emerging findings.

5. Allow stakeholders access to, and actively disseminate, evaluative information in ways that are easily understood by multiple audiences, and present evaluation results in forms that respect people and honor promises of confidentiality.

6. Maintain a balance between First 5 LA and other stakeholder needs and interests.

G. Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare: Evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of public interests and values that may be related to the evaluation.

1. The study approach takes into account the broad assumptions, implications and potential unintended consequences.

2. Take into account the public interest, going beyond analysis of particular stakeholder interests to consider the welfare of society as a whole.

3. Research and Evaluation staff will facilitate timely feedback to our own organizational learning and improvement as well as the learning and improvement of the organizations we fund

III. The Quality Assurance Process

The purpose of the Quality Assurance (QA) process is to ensure that First 5 LA conducts research that is transparent, appropriate, and relevant to the needs of First 5 LA and its stakeholders. First 5 LA has QA processes developed around the following documents:

- Request for Proposals
- Scope of Work
- Design and Analysis Plan
- Data
- Dissemination materials, such as reports and presentations

A QA committee will be assigned to review documents submitted by the Research Analyst, and this committee will utilize a checklist to examine whether the above principles are adequately addressed. The QA review process will take up to 10 business days. At the completion of the review, the committee will send the Research Analyst their report, which will be sent to the contractor.

If the contractor is unable or unwilling to address a concern raised by the QA committee, they may follow the QA dispute resolution process, outlined below.

IV. QUALITY ASSURANCE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

The First 5 LA Research and Evaluation department requires its contractors to abide by the principles described in the document, "Research and Evaluation: Guiding principles and policies for R&E work." A Quality Assurance (QA) committee review of documents submitted by the contractor will ensure that the contractor has followed these principles.

Quality Assurance review is a contractual obligation; however, in instances where the contractor or consultant disagrees with or cannot address the recommendations of the QA committee assigned to their project, they may formalize their disagreement through the following process:

1. Document their rationale for the disagreement on the QA checklist provided them by the Research Analyst
2. The Research Analyst will bring the rationale to the QA committee, and the QA committee will determine whether the rationale is sufficient. If the rationale is sufficient, then the document will pass the QA review.
3. If the rationale is not considered sufficient by the QA committee, the contractors will be notified that the document does not pass QA review, without which payment for the deliverable will not be released.
4. If the contractor completes the above process and still believes that they cannot complete the changes recommended by the QA committee, they may complete the attached QA dispute form and submit it to the Research Analyst assigned to their project. This document will be submitted to the First 5 LA Director of Research and Evaluation for consideration. Together they will come to a conclusion regarding the dispute. Their decision will be the final determination of whether the contractor has met the requirements set forth in their contract and scope of work.

Quality Assurance Dispute Form

Contractor name:

Project name:

Contract number:

Date:

Please describe the QA recommendation and the rationale for your disagreement with the QA recommendation. You may attach additional pages as necessary.

Please attach the following supporting documentation:

- QA report
- Deliverable that the QA report pertains to
- Project scope of work

This document will be submitted to the First 5 LA Director of Research and Evaluation for consideration. Together they will come to a conclusion regarding the dispute. Their decision will be the final determination of whether the contractor has met the requirements set forth in their contract and scope of work.