The First 5 Southern California Alliance for Learning and Results (SCALAR)

Southern California Regional First 5 Commissions

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Phase I:
First 5 SCALAR Implementation Activities

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<td>Qualifications Statement Due</td>
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<td>April 21, 2008</td>
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<td>May 2, 2008</td>
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Request for Qualifications

Purpose of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

The First 5 Southern California Alliance for Learning and Results (First 5 SCALAR) is requesting submission of Qualifications Statements from individuals, organizations, and companies that provide evaluation services (Consultants). Selected Consultants will assist with the first phase of the SCALAR’s implementation activities, including organizing, summarizing and communicating the evaluation results of the eight First 5 Commissions in the Southern California Region.

Background of the SCALAR

First 5 (Children and Families) Commissions were established in 1999 as a result of Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act of 1998. The Act provided for an excise tax on tobacco products, the proceeds of which are used to fund services and efforts that promote, support, and improve the early development and school readiness of children from the prenatal stage through five years of age. In addition to the state-level Commission, First 5 California (located in Sacramento), there are 58 County Commissions located throughout the state of California.

The First 5 SCALAR is an alliance of the evaluation branches of the Southern California Regional First 5 Commissions (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties). The SCALAR was developed by the Southern California Regional Commissions as part of ongoing Regional evaluation meetings. The SCALAR seeks to assess and communicate Regional Commissions’ collective impact on children ages prenatal through age five and their families in Southern California.

In July 2006, First 5 California launched a new Statewide Evaluation Framework (http://www.f5ac.org/files/First%205%20Framework%20Report%20Final%20v2edit-102705.pdf). The framework describes the creation of a State-level Center for Results to establish a “formalized structure for managing, analyzing, communicating of results and outcomes of First 5 investments statewide.” The First 5 SCALAR will create a similar central repository of Regional evaluation findings, which may later help to inform First 5 California’s Center for Results. The SCALAR will establish a Regional structure for collecting, managing, analyzing, and communicating evaluation results from the participating Commissions. The SCALAR’s activities will be conducted in coordination with First 5 California to ensure that they are complementary to the State-level Center for Results and that they enhance First 5 California’s efforts.

The SCALAR is committed to demonstrating meaningful evaluation results, and to responding to questions from a variety of constituents—policymakers and legislators chief among them. The proposed Regional central repository of evaluation findings could be used as a model for how a system addressing these needs can operate in Southern California.
Requirement to Evaluate Proposition 10 Funded Services

The Proposition 10 statute (Section 130150 of the California Health and Safety Code) requires each county Commission to “conduct an audit of, and issue a written report on the implementation and performance of, their…functions during the preceding fiscal year, including, at a minimum, the manner in which funds were expended, the progress toward, and the achievement of, program goals and objectives, and the measurement of specific outcomes through appropriate reliable indicators.”

All First 5 Commissions conduct evaluations in part to fulfill this mandatory function.

First 5 SCALAR Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of the First 5 SCALAR is to collect, manage, analyze and communicate results from the Southern California Regional First 5 Commissions, allowing both the accountability and learning functions of evaluation to be fulfilled. As such, the First 5 SCALAR will accomplish the following objectives:

Objective 1: **Improve First 5 services** by providing relevant information, and research and evaluation findings regarding Southern California Regional First 5 issues to First 5 staff and leadership.

Objective 2: **Provide relevant information to policymakers** and other interested First 5 stakeholders.

Objective 3: **Encourage rigorous program evaluation** across the Region by establishing standardized research and evaluation protocols for First 5 programs based on best practices.

Objective 4: **Expand knowledge of effective strategies** in evaluation and policy research by developing, modeling, and disseminating innovative approaches to program evaluation and policy research.

SCALAR Implementation Phases I and II

The SCALAR will conduct its activities in two phases.

Phase I will include the creation of a central repository of evaluation findings from Southern California Regional First 5 Commissions, the compilation of reports summarizing local evaluation activities, and the development of guidelines and recommendations for Regional research and evaluation activities.

Phase II will include the development of policy recommendations and communication of research findings, as well as the implementation of Regional First 5 research and evaluation projects, including in-depth case studies.
This Request for Qualifications pertains solely to the engagement of a Consultant to implement Phase I activities.

Scope of Work-Relevant Phase I Activities:

1. **Creation of a central repository of Southern California Regional First 5 evaluation findings.**

   The Consultant will develop a central repository of all relevant evaluation reports from the Southern California Regional Commissions and post them on a publicly-accessible forum, such as the First 5 California or First 5 Association of California websites. Results to be shared would include County Commission-level evaluation reports, as well as relevant materials drawn from other sources.

   The Consultant will also communicate ongoing progress on completing the Scope of Work activities on a quarterly basis.

2. **Development of reports detailing findings of the review of local evaluation reports.**

   The Consultant will aggregate information and evaluation findings from the eight Southern California Regional Commissions, analyze the reports, and identify common program elements, best practices, service gaps to be filled, and themes across the Region. The Consultant will also provide descriptions of the unique populations and relevant issues in the Southern California Region. The Consultant will then develop a series of white papers, reports and other dissemination materials regarding various topics pertaining to First 5 Commissions. The reports will focus on the most relevant First 5 programs and will present their findings in a format appropriate for specific audiences as needed.

   The release of these reports will be synchronized with important dates to heighten their impact and they will be used to keep the SCALAR entity and the Southern California Regional First 5 Commissions in the public eye. These reports will become an accessible source of information about First 5 Commissions, will highlight best practices, and may be used to attract outside researchers to study First 5 programs.

   In order to place First 5 evaluation results into a larger context, the Consultant will compare the Southern California First 5 findings with those of other applicable research and evaluation programs.

3. **Development and guidance of the implementation of a strategic Regional research and evaluation plan.**

   Following the review of Regional evaluations, the Consultant will identify best practices and methods for measuring results across programs and throughout the Region. Standardization of evaluation practices and uniform data collection protocols will enhance the Regional Commissions’ ability to answer key questions posed by various constituents. The Consultant will also conduct a feasibility assessment to identify which First 5 Regional projects and/or initiatives
can be included in a cost benefit analysis. This includes providing recommendations on future analysis of cost benefit of First 5 SCALAR investments.

To facilitate uniform data collection and communication among the Commissions, the Consultant will identify the functional definitions of the Results Areas and Service Areas used by different Commissions and will create a common set of definitions and terms to be used across the Region. The Consultant will make recommendations to the SCALAR regarding how to best standardize evaluation practices and data collection protocols.

The Consultant will identify potential research studies to be implemented across the Southern California Region and provide recommendations. Such studies will enhance the sustainability of the SCALAR and will promote the translation of research across the Region. In addition, the Consultant will develop processes and protocols for conducting Regional research studies, identify potential research partners outside of First 5 Commissions, and identify potential funders to support Regional research projects.

The Consultant will also make recommendations to the SCALAR on how to best tailor First 5 interventions to meet Regional needs, based on evaluation and research findings.

**Request for Qualifications: Consultant**

The First 5 SCALAR hereby solicits Qualifications Statements from Applicants interested in providing Consultant services for the SCALAR’s Phase I activities. The deadline for submission is March 24, 2008.
Scope of Work

The Consultant’s Scope of Work tasks and deliverables are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Phase I Deliverables: Consultant Tasks and Deliverables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Deliverable(s)</th>
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| 1. Creation of a central repository of First 5 evaluation findings. | • Database of reports and tools/instruments used to generate reports, and ability to sort by subject (e.g., home visitation or access to health care)  
  • Classifications of findings for the repository  
  • Database of Commission indicators and outcomes (using County strategic plans as a resource) |
| 1a. Post all relevant evaluation reports on publicly-accessible forums. | • Evaluation reports and other relevant materials posted on publicly-accessible forums, such as the First 5 California, the First 5 Association of California, First 5 SCALAR and the Southern California Regional Commissions’ websites |
| 1b. Communicate ongoing progress on completing the Scope of Work activities on a quarterly basis. | • Quarterly Progress Report |
| 2. Development of reports based on reviews of local evaluation products. | • Series of reports and/or white papers  
  • Concise talking points and/or Regional highlights |
<p>| 2a. Develop a detailed report on methodological approaches to completing tasks 1-3. | • Detailed report of methodology used to complete tasks 1-3 |
| 2b. Aggregate information and evaluation findings from the eight Southern California Regional Commissions. | • Any databases or electronic documents to categorize information and/or a memo describing progress |
| 2c. Analyze the reports and identify common program elements, best practices, service gaps to be filled, and themes across the Region. | • Any databases or electronic documents to categorize information and/or a memo describing progress and/or findings |
| 2d. Provide descriptions of the unique populations and relevant issues in the Southern California Region. | • Any databases or electronic documents to categorize information and/or a memo describing progress and/or findings |
| 2e. Develop a series of white papers, reports and other dissemination materials regarding various topics pertaining to First 5 Commissions. The reports will focus on the most relevant First 5 programs and will present their findings in a format appropriate for specific audiences as needed. | • White papers, reports and other dissemination materials |
| 2f. Compare the Southern California Regional First 5 findings with those of other applicable research and evaluation studies. | • Memo describing progress and/or findings reported in the final report |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<td>2g. Communicate ongoing progress on completing the Scope of Work activities on a quarterly basis.</td>
<td>• Quarterly Progress Report</td>
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| 3. Development and guidance regarding the implementation of a strategic regional research and evaluation plan. | • Regional research and evaluation plan  
• List of recommendations on potential future studies by the SCALAR and SCALAR-directed Consultants |
| 3a. Facilitate the standardization of definitions and protocols for evaluation activities. Standardization of evaluation practices and uniform data collection protocols will enhance the Regional Commissions’ ability to answer key questions posed by various constituents. | • Lists of standardized definitions and protocols (based on Regional needs)  
• Provide recommendations to the SCALAR regarding how to best standardize evaluation practices and data collection protocols. |
| 3b. Identify best practices and methods for measuring results across programs and throughout the Region. | • Memo describing progress and/or findings reported in the final report |
| 3c. Conduct a feasibility assessment to identify which First 5 Regional projects and/or initiatives can be included in a cost benefit analysis. This includes providing recommendations on future analysis of cost benefit of First 5 SCALAR investments. | • Memo describing progress and/or findings reported in the final report  
• Recommendations on future analysis of cost benefit of First 5 SCALAR investments. |
| 3d. Identify the functional definitions of the Results Areas and Service Areas used by different Commissions. The Consultant will also create a common set of definitions and terms of the Results Areas and Service Areas to be used across the Region. (This task may align with task 3a.) | • Lists of functional definitions  
• List of common definitions and terms of the Result Areas and Services Areas to be used across the Region  
• Recommendations on aligning First 5 California and Regional evaluation and data needs |
| 3e. Identify potential research studies to be implemented across the Southern California Region and provide recommendations. Such studies will enhance the sustainability of the SCALAR and will promote the translation of research across the Region. | • Recommendations on potential research studies and possible implications with implementation |
| 3f. Develop processes and protocols for conducting Regional research studies. | • Documents detailing process and protocols for conducting Regional research studies |
| 3g. Identify potential research partners outside of First 5 Commissions. | Recommendations on potential research partners outside of First 5 Commissions |
The SCALAR is committed to collaboration and coordination with other individuals and groups who can help it reach its goals and objectives. Consultants hired to work with the SCALAR must coordinate with and provide information to staff from the eight County Commissions in the Southern California Region and First 5 California. Additionally, Consultants will serve in an advisory capacity to the SCALAR and will develop a list of recommendations regarding the potential future focus of the SCALAR and how that role complements First 5 California’s efforts.

**RFQ Application Review Criteria**

The Consultant will be selected based on the following review criteria:

I. **Applicant’s qualifications and capability relevant to the Scope of Work:**

   1. Demonstrates that the applicant has had a physical presence in one or more of the 8 Southern California Regional Counties for three or more years.
   2. Experience in working with Children and Families Proposition 10 and First 5 Commissions.
   3. Experience in evaluating aggregated effects of multiple concurrent initiatives in a well-defined target area.
   4. Ability to elicit and synthesize a variety of perspectives on complex community initiatives operating in varying contextual conditions.
   5. Experience conducting meta-analysis of data and/or evaluation reports with varying foci.
   6. Familiarity with services for young children and families in the Southern California Region.
   7. Strong skills in developing logic models/theories of change in community settings.
   8. Strong knowledge of program evaluation theories, methods, practices and terminology.
   9. Strong group facilitation skills.
   10. Excellent planning and time management skills.
II. Applicant’s approach to accomplish the Scope of Work:

1. Provides a clear overall approach and methodology in analyzing the potential and intended linkages of the First 5 SCALAR’s evaluation efforts and other related work in the Region.
2. Describes methods of work that reflect a comprehensive understanding of tasks to be accomplished.
3. Provides a detailed description of previous experiences that are directly relevant to how the work would be carried out.
4. Describes a system of summarizing, synthesizing and analyzing varying information into a coherent report.
5. Describes the roles of project team members.
6. Describes a logical timeline that indicates an understanding of key activities to accomplish the work.

Assessment Criteria

Written applications will be reviewed using an assessment tool based on 1) Applicant’s qualifications and capability relevant to the Scope of Work and 2) Applicant’s approach to accomplish the Scope of Work. Commission staff will utilize the rating tool to provide an objective basis for scoring the Applications/Qualifications Statements. The rating tool will include two components 1) qualifications and capability relevant to the Scope of work (60%) and 2) approach to accomplish the Scope of Work (40%). Applications / Qualifications Statements with scores of 85% or higher will be selected for finalist interviews (if needed). Final selection will be conducted through a consensus process by a review panel consisting of SCALAR staff and with final approval by the Executive Directors of the respective Southern California Regional First 5 Commissions.

(Please note that finalist interviews may be conducted in the same week as finalist notification.)

Who should respond to this RFQ?

Respondents may be individuals or groups that can demonstrate experience providing outstanding evaluation services. Respondents must be able to correspond via email, including the transmission of reports.

How to respond to this RFQ

Submit Qualifications Statements to:

Marc Davidson
SCALAR/ First 5 LA
Department of Research and Evaluation
750 N. Alameda St., Suite 300
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Qualifications Statements must be received at the First 5 LA Commission offices no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 24, 2008.

Each Qualifications Statement must include the original document and 5 copies, in a sealed package, addressed as shown above, bearing the submitter’s name and address and clearly marked “RFQ: First 5 Southern California Alliance for Learning and Results – Phase I.”

Qualifications Statements received at the First 5 LA offices after the date and time specified above will be rejected by the SCALAR as non-responsive.

RFQ Application Response Content Requirements

Format and Content – Proposals must be submitted on 8 ½” by 11” size paper, double-spaced, using no smaller than a 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Lengthy, redundant narrative is strongly discouraged. As you complete the application, be sure to attend to each of the review criteria. In total, proposals may not exceed 20 pages (excluding resumes and sample reports) and application should be presented in the following order:

1) Cover letter – Each proposal shall include a cover letter addressed to Marc Davidson, SCALAR/ First 5 LA Department of Research and Evaluation, and specify the following:
   a) Identification of submitter, including name, title, address, email address and telephone number
   b) Name, title, address, email address and telephone number of contact person
   c) A statement to the effect that the proposal shall remain valid for a period of not less than 120 days from the date of submission
   d) Signature of a person authorized to bind the submitter to the terms of the proposal

2) Statement of Qualifications and Experience
   a) Provide a description of the Applicant (individual or group) that includes your primary purpose and function, evaluation philosophy, size (number of employees), location of office(s), number of years in business, and general description of your experience as a Consultant.
   b) Provide a general description of the Applicant’s financial condition and identify any conditions (e.g., bankruptcy, pending litigation, planned office closures, or impending mergers) that may impede the Applicant’s ability to provide Consultant services.
   c) Describe the Applicant’s experience in performing work of a nature similar to that solicited in this RFQ. The respondent must directly relate their experience with the items in the anticipated Scope of Work. Describe at least two key projects for which sample reports can be provided. Include descriptions of the purposes of the evaluations, how the projects were developed and implemented, challenges, experiences with obtaining Institutional Review Board approval (if needed), and how the reports were used (if known).
i) Please describe the Applicant’s experience working in the Region of Southern California.

ii) Please describe the Applicant’s experience with and ability to evaluate Proposition 10/First 5 Commission operations and programs and/or programs for children ages 0-5 (e.g., early education, oral health, and health care access). Please provide examples.

iii) Describe the Applicant’s experience working with community-based organizations, school districts, hospitals, and other public and private organizations.

d) If the Applicant anticipates using Subcontractors, the Subcontractors should each be identified by company name, address, contact person, email address, telephone number, and project function.

e) Provide names, titles, addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of at least three (3) references. References should be organizations or individuals for whom the Applicant has provided the Consultant services that are cited as related experience.

3) Approach to Evaluation

a) Provide a brief statement of your (or your organization’s) philosophy of evaluation.

b) For at least one anticipated Scope of Work area, describe an approach that could be used to carry out the required tasks. The approach should demonstrate the Applicant’s philosophy and abilities to evaluate SCALAR-funded services. 

(Note: This section may also be used to address components of the review criteria.)

4) Proposed Staffing and Project Organization

a) Identify all key personnel and their roles and responsibilities as they relate to providing evaluation services to the SCALAR.

b) Provide brief resumes or curricula vitae (not more than 2 pages each) for the proposed Project Manager and all key personnel, including Subcontractors. These will not be counted as part of the 20-page submission limit. One original and 5 copies of each should be submitted with the response package.

5) Budget/Cost Information -- contracts will be developed on a time and materials basis

a) Submit proposed pricing including:

i) Hourly rates for all staff involved as well as escalation of these rates over time (2008 through 2009). Describe what is included in the hourly rates (salary, benefits, overhead, indirect costs, etc.)

6) Exceptions / Deviations – State any exceptions to or deviations from the requirements of this RFQ, segregating “technical” exceptions from “contractual” exceptions. The response may include proposed alternative approaches to meeting the SCALAR’s technical or contractual requirements, which should be thoroughly explained.
Other Submission Information

Acceptance of Proposals – The SCALAR reserves the right to do any or all of the following:

- Accept or reject all Qualifications Statements/Applications/Proposals, or any item or part thereof, or to waive any informalities or irregularities in submissions.
- Withdraw this RFQ at any time without prior notice. The SCALAR makes no representations that any contract will be awarded to any Applicant responding to this RFQ.
- Postpone the qualification of Applicants for its own convenience.

Please note that all proposals become public documents upon submission.

Contract Type – The SCALAR anticipates entering into one or more time and expense (time and materials) contracts to provide evaluation services as needed. All contracts are anticipated to be for up to 13 months, June 2008 through June 2009, with work orders issued for specific work to be performed and with the possibility for renewal. There is no guarantee that Consultants selected through this RFQ process will receive a work order to perform work, even if they have a signed contract.

Joint Offers – Two or more Applicants may submit a single response package to this RFQ if one Evaluator agrees to serve as the primary Contractor. The SCALAR intends to develop one contract for each response that is selected. The SCALAR will not contract with multiple firms doing business as a joint venture.

Pre-contractual Expenses – The SCALAR shall not, in any event, be liable for any pre-contractual expenses incurred by the Evaluator in the preparation of its response. The Evaluator shall not include any such expenses as part of its response.

Application Review

The SCALAR will use a review panel to evaluate the responses received based on the criteria described above. Recommendations of the review panel are intended to be presented to the SCALAR for formal action to select the Consultant. After approval by the SCALAR, Executive Directors of the respective Southern California Regional Commissions and/or Commissioners, contracts may be negotiated with the selected Consultant.

Please note that there is no appeal process.